CATTY ATKINS BAND MASTER

Books by

CLARENCE BUDINGTON KELLAND

Catty Atkins, Bandmaster

Catty Atkins

Catty Atkins, Riverman

Catty Atkins, Sailorman

Catty Atkins, Financier

Mark Tidd

Mark Tidd in the Backwoods

Mark Tidd in Business

Mark Tidd's Citadel

Mark Tidd, Editor

Mark Tidd, Manufacturer

HARPER & BROTHERS

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THEN CATTY LIFTED HIS HAND AND WHEN HE BROUGHT IT DOWN WE WALLOPED THE FIRST NOTE.

CATTY ATKINS BANDMASTER

By

Clarence Budington Kelland

Author of "CATTY ATKINS, FINANCIER"
"CATTY ATKINS, SAILORMAN," ETC.

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CATTY ATKINS—BANDMASTER

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CATTY ATKINS
BANDMASTER

CATTY ATKINS—BANDMASTER

CHAPTER I

I SAT down and figured about Catty Atkins. Something was wrong with him. He didn't act natural—in fact, he didn't act at all. For the most part he just *wasn't.* Generally Catty was the sort of fellow you could always find, because where he was things were happening, but for more than two weeks he was a regular disappearing trick. Every time I went where I knew he was, why, he wasn't there, and when I looked somewheres else, he wasn't there, either.

I didn't know but maybe he'd got himself a bump on the head and was going out of his mind, or something like that, and I was worried. It wasn't his disappearing all the time that got me worried as much as it was the way he acted when I did run onto him. He had a funny look in his eyes, a kind of a long-distance look, and half the time he

didn't hear what I said to him, and the other half he didn't care whether I said anything or not.

And he made funny faces and wiggled his fingers. I watched him out of the corner of my eye when he didn't think I was watching him, and he'd make silly-looking motions with his lips—like he was going to kiss somebody, and puff out his cheeks like he was going to blow them away when the kissing was done. That wasn't right. Nobody goes around making his face look that way unless he needs a doctor. And he waggled his fingers—twiddle, twiddle, twiddle. He was at it all the time, so I began to suspect St. Vitus' dance. That would be an awful combination, I said to myself, if he came down with insanity and St. Vitus' dance all at once. Nothing could make it worse unless he added in the hives and had to scratch betweenwhiles.

I cornered him once and I says to him, says I, "Catty Atkins, I've known you man and boy for three-four years, and I haven't ever seen you act like this before."

"I'll bet," he says, "there are almost half a dozen other things in the world you haven't seen." And then he waggled his

fingers and puffed out his cheeks, and that far-away look came into his eyes.

"Are you sick?" says I.

"I eat my meals regular," says he.

"Catty," says I, kind of pleading, "you know me, all right, don't you? Have any difficulty recognizing folks or anything?"

He looked at me kind of funny, and then he says: "Well, sometimes I have mistaken you for something else. Yes, sir. Every now and again it seems to me you aren't Wee-wee Moore at all, but just a half-witted whang-doodle."

"Huh!" says I. "That's what a friend gets for trying to find out and maybe help a little."

"Well," says he, "just at this present moment of writing, help is what I need the least of."

"But something ails you," I says.

"If it does," he says, "it can't be cured."

"Been to a doctor?" says I.

"Nope," he says, "to a professor."

Then I really got scared, because professors are bad medicine. You can't tell what they'll do to you. Mesmerize you or something—and I wondered if maybe Catty hadn't let some man mesmerize him and then

the man hadn't been able to bring him out of it. That would be awful. Just think of running around the world all the rest of your life mesmerized. Why, at a show in the town hall I saw one of these professors mesmerize Jim Doover so Jim thought he was a flock of ducks and went around quacking and trying to swim right there on the stage.

Catty acted like it. I says to myself that maybe this professor had made Catty think he was a puff adder, but then a puff adder doesn't have fingers to wiggle. It was too much for me. Right then and there I made up my mind that Catty wasn't fit to take care of himself, and needed a keeper, and I says to myself that I'd be it, whatever come of it. I told myself I'd keep an eye on Catty if I had to shadow him every hour of the day or night.

Well, that was easier said than done, for when Catty Atkins wants to hide out, he hides out. There isn't any fooling about it. He takes pains with it and does a first-class job. And if he wants to get away from anybody, he puts his mind to the job, and the first thing you know, why, he's gone, and you don't know when or how he managed it.

For more than a week he dodged me in

spite of all I could do, but one day I got him. Yes, sir, I bamboozled Catty Atkins, and I'm kind of proud of it. I was talking to him, and I began to groan awful pitiful and hang on to my stummick, and then I says, "Gosh! I wonder if the's any cholera around," and made off toward home. Right off he must have thought I was good and sick. But I wasn't. I just ducked around the corner and circled and hid behind the fence. He waited around awhile, and then, stealthy-like, he came sneaking out of his yard with a box in his hand, a funny-looking box, and started out of town with it. He ducked and dodged and twisted, but I stuck to him like grim death. He was heading for the woods.

But don't you ever think I had an easy time following him. No, sir. Even though he was sure nobody was following him he went along as if he was sure a whole tribe of wild Indians was on his trail. That was the way with Catty always. He didn't waste any time. No matter what he did, he got the most out of it. He always mixed up some game with any job he was on. By-product, he called it. Sounded kind of silly to me until I got used to it, but then—well, it sort of

gave you about twice as much use out of a day as you got any other way.

For instance, if he was going on an errand to buy a pound of sugar, he didn't just go and buy sugar like the rest of us, and so use up maybe half an hour for one thing. Not Catty. He'd get the sugar, all right, but he'd pretend he was going into enemy country to bring out a secret message, or something like that. He'd work stratagems and shoot lurking foes, and the trouble he'd have getting his sugar home would make you sweat. But it wouldn't take any longer than just doing the errand without frills—and he'd have half an hour of good fun that other fellows missed.

That's what he was doing now, all right. Of course I don't know what he was pretending, but he was doing it hard, and he made it as difficult to follow him, almost, as it would be to try to track a fish through the water by the footprints it left. He circled, and waited in hiding, and took cut-offs and every other thing he could think of. I almost lost him a couple of times, and I sure would have lost him altogether if I hadn't known him so well. But I sort of made believe I was Catty

and acted like he would have acted, and everything came out all right.

He went across the river and along the bank for a spell. Then he dodged up the hill and back into the woods and out toward the lake.

"I'll bet," says I to myself, "that he's heading for the cave." But I didn't dare take a chance. No, siree. I just mogged along after him the best way I could, and sure enough, we ended up right at the old cave. I didn't see him go in, but when we got in the neighborhood, I knew he was there. I waited awhile and then crept up, and all of a sudden there came a sound.

Now there are different kinds of sounds. There's the kind of sounds that are pleasant, and the kind that just disturb you, and then there are another kind, and they lift the hair right off of your scalp. I don't believe there's anything can scare a fellow so badly as one of that kind of sounds. It was the last kind of a sound you would expect to hear away off there in the woods, and it wasn't human. It sounded like one of those prehistoric animals you read about in books—and as if he had the worst stummick ache in the world. It wasn't a groan and it wasn't a screech and

it wasn't a holler for the doctor. It was more like a blat. And yet it wasn't a sheep blat. It would have taken fifty sheep rolled into one to make as much noise.

I was like to keel over, I was so scared, and I says to myself, "If something's wrong with Catty Atkins that makes him give out that noise, then he's done for and nothing can save him." That was what I thought. Just being crazy couldn't make anybody think up a noise of that kind. It was suffering, that's what it was. And some awful hard suffering, too.

Well, I'm not brave especially, as anybody knows, but somehow I couldn't leave Catty to be in that cave and have all that kind of agony going on. I couldn't bear it. I was shaking all over and it was hard to make my legs carry me nearer, but I did it all the same, and came to where I could peek into the mouth of the cave. It was kind of dark at first, but gradually my eyes got used to it. And all the time those frightful sounds were coming out right in my face. I don't know what I expected to see, but I didn't want to see it.

Then, when my eyes got the sunshine out of them, I made out a figure inside, sitting

still. It was Catty, all right. He wasn't writhing around like I expected and maybe frothing at the mouth or having a fit. He was sitting perfectly still, letting out that beastly racket. It almost split my ears open. Then I took myself by the collar and the seat of the pants and made myself go in.

Catty didn't hear me. I could see him plain now. He was sitting with his eyes tight shut, swaying his body from one side to the other and holding something up to his mouth. It was this thing that made the noise. I crawled nearer, and then I saw what it was. It was a horn! Catty was blowing on it with all his might, and what he made wasn't music, not by a long shot. . . . Crazy, that's what he was, plumb, jamb loony.

"Catty," says I.

He didn't hear.

"Catty," I says, louder.

He turned his head a little and took the horn away from his lips.

"Catty," says I, "it's Wee-wee. Don't you know me?"

"If you look the same as usual," says he, "nobody could forget you."

"Hadn't you better let me take you home?" says I.

"How'd you get here?" says he.

"I followed you," says I.

"You must be improving, then," says he. "I thought I shook off all pursuers."

"You couldn't shake me off to-day," says I, "and now come home and we'll get your folks to see a doctor, and maybe, after all, something can be done for you."

"Huh!" says he, sour-like. "You're getting to be a joker."

"I'm not joking," says I. "I'm worried. It isn't any joke to be crazy and to go around waggling and making faces like you been doing, and to sneak off here to make blats on a horn. I'll bet anything you can be cured."

He laid his horn down across his knee and looked at me, and then he grinned. "So that's it!" says he. "Well, Wee-wee, I hope you'll get to be crazy as I am some day, and then maybe you'll be worth the trouble your folks take to raise you."

"Aren't you nutty?" says I.

"Do I look it?" says he.

"You do," says I.

He kind of stopped at that, and then he says: "Now, Wee-wee, sit down and let

your brain settle. It's all muddied up. I s'pose I've got to tell you."

"You have," says I.

"See this?" he says, holding out the horn.

"Yes," I says.

"Know what it is?"

"Horn," says I.

"Cornet," says he, "and I'm learning to play it. You can't learn to play a cornet in town without having all the neighbors go to the police, so I come out here where it won't disturb anybody. I wanted to get it all learned before anybody found out about it, but, of course, you'd have to run wild and spot me. Anyhow, I'm getting pretty fair, don't you think so? I can play 'Yankee Doodle'."

"Play it," says I.

"I just did," says he.

"Was that 'Yankee Doodle' I just heard?"

"It was."

"Then," says I, "they've changed it quite a lot since I knew it."

"Huh!" says he.

"What's the idea?" I wanted to know.

"Music," says he. "Don't you like music?"

"Well," I says, "I kind of like music. I

thought I did, anyhow. But if this thing you're doing is music, then I guess I ain't as fond of it as I thought I was."

"D'you mean you didn't recognize the tune?" he says, kind of anxious.

"Well," I says, "I was a bit excited, maybe, and I didn't. Play it over again and I'll see."

He did it.

"Um . . . !" says I. "There was a spot where I thought it sounded kind of familiar, maybe a note or so, but take it from beginning to end and I couldn't swear to it before a jury."

"You didn't give me time enough to learn it perfect," he says.

"Again," I says, "what's the idea?"

"Band," he says.

"What kind of a band—Band of Mercy?"

"Brass band," says he. "I'm going to get up a boys' brass band right here in town, and I'm going to be bandmaster of it, and all the fellows are going to be in it and play horns and things."

"Sweet By-and-by!" says I.

"I got it all planned. There's an old man in dad's mill—he's the millwright, and he's going to train us, and we're going to play at everything and make money."

"Maybe folks won't let us play at everything," says I.

"When they hear us they will," he says.

I had my doubts, but I kept my mouth shut.

"Well," says he after a minute, "now that I'm caught, we might as well start to organize. We'll call a meeting and get the band together, and we'll arrange to buy instruments and uniforms, and get to whizzing. We got to have a bang-up band by Labor Day."

"Why?" says I.

"Because," says he, "there's a band tournament Labor Day at the capital, and a prize of five hundred dollars for the best band in the state, and I want we should win it."

"Catty," says I, "it's funny how little you can get along with."

"Somebody 'll win it, won't they?"

"Sure," says I.

"Well," he says, "if some band can win it, why can't my band?"

"I give it up," says I. "What's the answer?"

"Come on," he says, "and we'll set the ball to rolling."

CHAPTER II

AS we walked along I got to thinking, and the more I thought, the better Catty's band idea seemed to me. Maybe part of it was relief from thinking he was going crazy, but anyhow, I was all for it, and I could hardly wait till I got some kind of an instrument to toot on. I figured I must have a pretty good idea of music and an ear for it, because I could whistle almost any tune so folks knew what it was right off, and all playing a horn is, it seemed to me, was whistling kind of into a mouthpiece instead of just out into the air.

"Say, Catty," says I, "what kind of a horn do you think I could play best?"

"The bass drum," says he.

"You can forget that right now," says I. "If I'm going to be in your old band I'm going to play something and not walk around carrying a clothes basket and beating a rug. I can do that at home and not be in a band at all."

"Well," says he, "you might try a saxo-

phone. It's the funniest-looking thing in a band."

"What d'you mean?" says I.

"Think it over," says he.

"Huh!" says I. "Maybe a lot of folks come around after your photograph, but I haven't seen 'em."

He kind of laughed, and then he spatted me on the back and says: "I guess neither of us will win a beauty prize. Forget it. I wouldn't be surprised if I was kind of sore because you got the best of me and found out what I was doing."

That was the way with him. If he did something, and then got it into his head it wasn't the right thing to do, he wasn't afraid to say so and square himself. And he always did it right off before you got real sore and allowed it to set and harden. I'll admit he was a little snappy sometimes, but that was just when his vanity was touched. As near as I can gather, most folks would rather have anything about them touched than their vanity.

"How many fellows are you going to have in this band?" I asked.

"As many as we can get," says he.

"Got anybody picked out?"

"You don't pick out a band," he says, "you just take everybody that owns a horn. A band is like vegetable salad—you put everything into it that you can get your hands on."

"How do we start?"

"I think we better take a horn census," says he. "Find out who owns instruments, and who can borrow them, and then see about raising a fund to buy more."

"Will we have uniforms?"

"Will we have uniforms!" says he. "We will. That's really what I'm getting up this band for—so I can wear one of these giddy circus-wagon suits of clothes. Yes, sir. Those uniforms are going to be uniforms you can see. I don't mind what color they are, so long as they're red."

"Red suits me fine," says I, "with gold trimmings."

"I wonder how many kids there are in town," Catty says.

"About a million," says I.

"There's just this about it," he says, "any kid who gets into this band has got to work. He's got to practice and learn how to play, or out he goes. We haven't got five months

to get all ready and win that prize, so we've got to hustle."

"Then," says I, "let's start now. We'll see all the kids we can and call a meeting for to-night and have your millwright there. What's his name?"

"Hans Knudsen," he says.

"Whistle it," says I.

"He's Italian," says Catty.

"Those Italians are the best musicians," I says. "I heard dad say so."

"We'll meet in my back yard," Catty says. "After that we can see about getting the town hall to practice in."

"Maybe, for a while, we better get a barn out in the country where folks can't hear us so plain. . . . Anyhow, if it sounds anything like that cornet of yours."

"Wait till you get an earful of your own music," he says. "Say, why don't you play a clarinet?"

"What's it like?"

"Kind of like a flute, only you blow in the end of it, and it's all over keys and things to wiggle."

"What kind of noise does it make?"

"Something like a tomcat with a hard cold," he says.

"Then," says I, "that's my instrument."

"Beside that," he says, "we've got to have altos and tubas and tenors and a whole lot of other ones, to say nothing of a bass drum and snare drum and cymbals."

"Where 'll we get 'em?" says I.

"That," says he, "is what's worrying me. Band instruments cost money."

"And uniforms," says I.

"We'll have to establish a treasury," says he.

"A treasury's fine," says I, "but something to put in it is better. I'd rather have a nickel in my hand than a bank that could hold a thousand dollars."

"There's ways of raising money," says he.

"Lots of 'em," says I. "Which one shall we pick out?"

"The easiest," says he, with a grin. "We'll try that one first and then work up to the harder ones."

"And what's the easiest?"

"To have somebody give it to us."

"Um . . . !" says I. "Who, for instance?"

"The business men of the town," says he. "They chip in to outfit the baseball team, and for other things, so why not for a town band?"

"Well," says I, "you do the asking. I never did like to get kicked out of places. After a while it gets so it hurts."

"We might write letters," says he, kind of dubious.

"Yes," says I, "and we might give a strawberry festival, like the church does."

Well, sir, he just stopped short and looked at me like he never saw me before. He looked me over from head to foot, and then he came closer and looked some more, and then he waggled his head.

"It's Wee-wee Moore, all right, isn't it?"

"Yes," says I.

"Shake," says he.

"What for?" says I.

"Because," says he, "I think you up and had a notion."

"If," says I, "you weren't always talking so much you couldn't hear anything else, you'd see I have quite a lot of them."

"Um . . .! Strawberry festival," says he. "That isn't just it. Not just exactly, but the idea's there. It sure is. Now let's see. Strawberry festival, chicken-pie supper, clam-bake— Nope. None of them is just the thing. You have to spend too much to

get back a little. What we want is some sort of a rincus that's all profit."

"The way it looks to me," says I, "is that we better find out if anybody wants to be in a band before we raise a lot of money for horns that maybe nobody will ever play on."

"No worry about that," says he. "Just watch."

"We'll see," says I, "when we get a meeting called. Better make it to-night and have it over with. Suppose we spend the rest of the day telling all the fellows to show up."

"Fine," he says, "only it takes so much time off my practicing on my cornet."

Well, that was that. We started out and buttonholed every kid we met and told him to be around at the meeting. At first most of them kind of held their noses like there was something in the air they didn't think so much of, but after Catty got to talking they cocked their ears, and pretty soon they got the idea that it would be a lot of fun and maybe it could be done. Lots of kids are that way. Right off, as soon as anybody proposes something that isn't done every morning, or that looks a little hard, why, they drag back on the lines and say you're crazy to suggest it. They don't have

any gimp. It looks to me like they wanted somebody to come and dump everything in their laps. They make me sick. I'd like to know how anybody ever would get anywhere if nobody made a start and tried. It's a copper-riveted certainty you never can have anything unless you want it, and there's no use wanting it unless you start in to get it. And then it's mighty surprising to see what you can get away with.

The first kid we tackled was Balmy Snow. Balmy was about my age, but he was so tall it took him five minutes to look down as far as his feet, and he had so many freckles there wasn't any skin left under them, so he was all over a kind of a rotten-apple color, with just a pin point of white skin now and then. All the time he kept scrooching down so folks wouldn't notice how tall he was, and every time he sat in a chair he'd tie his legs around each other in a kind of a bowknot, because if he didn't they'd poke away out into the next room and maybe through that door on to the porch. Catty said that if he got a stone bruise on his foot in swimming he wouldn't find it out till he went to put skates on the next winter. But he wasn't a bad kid, outside of being bashful and kind

of thick in the head, which, maybe, was on account of growing so much in the legs he didn't have time to grow in the head. Anyhow, we enlisted him after he got it understood that what we were getting up was a brass band and not a Band of Mercy or a robbers' band or a bandana handkerchief. He claimed he had a good ear for music, and especially for keeping time. Time, he said, was where he shone, because he couldn't help stamping his feet whenever music played, and folks always did tell him that he stamped in perfect time. He didn't mention what else they said, and we didn't ask, but I'll bet there have been a lot of places folks have asked him to go away from.

He said he'd come in, but the best part of it was he thought he could get an instrument to play, and it happened it was the one he'd rather play than any other one. He said his uncle used to play a bass drum with a circus band—not all the time, you understand, but just when he wasn't driving stakes—and his drum was at Balmy's house in the attic, and he could get it out without anybody noticing it. Just how anybody can sneak a bass drum out of anywhere is more than I can see, but Balmy said he could.

Maybe he figured on hiding it under his shirt. Well, that was one.

We told him to start in collecting kids, and on we went. By six o'clock we'd seen about a million. Got a dozen all at one whack out at the swimming hole, though it was pretty early to go in the water, and every one of them would have to get his hair good and dry before he dared go home. We did pretty well there. Out of that crowd we got eight who wanted to belong. One of them had a pair of drumsticks his great-grandfather used in the Mexican War—but no drum. I kind of wondered what his great-grandfather did to the Mexicans with those drumsticks. Maybe he sat on them and did the paradiddle on their heads until they surrendered. Paradiddle! You don't mean to say you don't know what a paradiddle is? Huh! Well, of course, being in a band and all that, I know lots of things just ordinary kids don't know. A paradiddle is a thing you do on a drum. It's a kind of a tune with drumsticks. They have lots of funny names for things you play on a drum. There's a flam, and a flam-paradiddle, and, oh, well, you never could learn to do them, so what's the use telling

you? Anyhow, we were ahead a pair of drumsticks and eight kids.

But that wasn't enough. We kept right on until we had almost every boy in town promised, and they agreed to come at half past seven, and as many of them would fetch band instruments as could manage to find any. And they did.

That night there showed up thirty-two kids, and out of that bunch we got Balmy's bass drum; that other pair of drumsticks; an army bugle, kind of dented in, but noisy; a fife out of an old fife-and-drum corps; a pair of cymbals, one with the handle busted off; a mouth organ; a jew's-harp; and one of these funny-looking things that you might make a mistake and try to eat for a sweet potato. That was the collection.

Catty made them sit down and keep quiet, and then he got on to his legs and made a speech.

CHAPTER III

WELL, sir, Catty began to talk, and you'd have thought being in a band was the greatest thing in the world, and a lot more fun than being a clown in a circus. He had a way of talking that got you around to his way of thinking, too, and when he got through that bunch of fellows were sure they'd rather play in his band than be Presidents of the United States.

"Now," says he, "who's going to enlist? It means business. Any fellow who comes in has got to promise to work and practice and learn to play his instrument. There won't be any monkeying. Who's coming in?"

Everybody was coming, it looked like, so Catty had them step up and sign their names in a book.

"What 're we goin' to play on?" Fatty Wiggins wanted to know.

"Just what men play on in grown-up bands," says Catty.

"Be we goin' to have a drum major?"

"Sure," says Catty.

"Who's goin' to be it?"

"Don't know."

"Because," says Fatty, "I know where I kin git me a drum major's stick, and I will if I can be the feller that twiddles it. My uncle's got one and he'll give it to me. It's got a silver ball on the top of it."

"Fine," says Catty, "and if you learn to twirl it good you can have the job." So there we were all fixed up with a drum major. It beats anything the way things pile up. Here we'd started out with nothing, and before we knew where we were at we had the beginning of a band—anyway, we had a bass drum and a stick to twiddle.

"And," says Catty, "we got to begin to work right off. Because the state band tournament comes off on Labor Day, and there's a five-hundred-dollar prize we got to win."

"I bet you we don't," says Wally Tucker.

"Why not? I'd like to know," says Catty.

"Because on account of what I heard to-day," says Wally.

"And what was that?"

"Why," says Wally, "Mr. Withey, over to Sunfield—you know the rich man that's got

the big summer place—has got up a boys' band over there, and he's bought 'em horns and everythin', and uniforms, and hired a feller from the city to come out and teach 'em to play. He says he's goin' to win that prize."

"Um . . . !" says Catty. "Are you sure?"

"My cousin he told me, and he's in the band."

"Well," says Catty, "if we can beat other bands, we can beat them."

"Yes," says Wally, "and Torrey Withey is goin' to be bandmaster, and Mr. Withey's fixed it up for the whole band to go campin' together over to the lake in tents for a month, with their teacher along, and they're goin' to have a dickens of a good time—and if they win the prize, Mr. Withey's goin' to give his son a automobile and he's goin' to give every one of the band a trip to Washington to play for the President. That's what my cousin told me."

"Well," says Catty, "if the President can stand it, I guess I can. Um . . . ! Campin' for a month, eh? Sounds kind of good."

"Wisht we had a rich man to do that for us," says Fatty Wiggins.

"We haven't," says Catty, "so we got to

do for ourselves, and the sooner we start the quicker we'll get some place. Now, whose father will buy him a horn?"

About ten fellows thought they could manage that, and wanted to know what kind of horns they should get, but Catty said he didn't know; that Hans Knudsen, who was going to train the band, would tell them all what to get.

"How many," says he, "can read music?"

"I can read the words," says Fatty, "but I can't tell what them notes is all about."

Catty kind of grins and says that will be a big help, but if everybody will show up to-morrow night Hans Knudsen will start to teach them how to read music.

"Do I have to learn to read music, to play the bass drum?" says Balmy Snow.

"You bet you do," says Catty. "Bass-drum music is about as hard to read as any kind of music there is, except maybe for the pipe organ, and we aren't going to have any pipe organ in this band."

"Why not?" says Wally Tucker, who was one of those kids who are always afraid somebody is going to do them out of something that's coming to them. "I'd like to

know why we can't have a pipe organ. I'll bet that Sunfield band will have one."

"If they do," says Catty, "I promise we'll have one, too. We'd have one, anyhow, only I'm a little worried about who we'd get to carry it in parades."

"Be we goin' to play tunes right off?" Bill Webb wanted to know, "or have we got to monkey with them finger exercises like my sister uses on the piano? Tunes is all right, when you can make out what they are," he says, "which, when my sister plays 'em, you 'most gen'ally can't, but them finger exercises!" He whistled. "Say, when she gits a-goin' on them, just kind of dilly-dallyin' up and down the keys without makin' no sense at all, why, now, then I git up and git out of the house. Yes, sir. I says to her, maybe them exercises is all right after you learn so's you kin play good and know all the tunes they is, but for a beginner like you, exercises ain't no good a-tall."

"We'll try to fix you up, Bill," says Catty, "but now, how about instruments? We got to get them as quick as possible, and where we goin' to git the money?"

"Ask for it," says Fatty.

"All right," says Catty. "Now, to-morrow

night each of you come back here and report about the folks you've asked, and fetch what money you get with you. Then we'll know where we're at. I'll kind of campaign to-morrow amongst the merchants and see what I can get out of them. And that's all for to-night."

Next morning Catty and I went the rounds of the merchants and we tried to tell them what good advertising for the town a regular band would be, and how it would bring in the farmers on band-concert nights to listen and so fetch a lot of extra trade to the stores. We only had to run once to get out of being kicked, but twice we dodged things that was thrown at us. Outside of that we had pretty good luck. Ramsey, the druggist, says he wouldn't donate any cash, but he'd go so far as to treat us both to a chocolate-ice-cream sody. We let him. But they weren't all like that. Folks around town had got to know Catty most gen'ally got what he went after, and that if he was goin' to have a band it would be a good one. You know it's a first-class thing to have a reputation. Now, take a kid nobody knew and that didn't have a record, why, he'd have a sweet time trying to collect a lot of money for a band or for

anything else, but just let somebody that has shown folks what he can do—just let a fellow like that come along—and it 'll surprise you. By cracky! it beats the Dutch what a valuable thing it is! If ever I get any spare time I'm going out and whittle a reputation for myself. There's money in it.

Anyhow, more than half of the merchants said they thought it would be a good thing, and we collected fifty-five dollars, and that looked like a lot of money to me, but Catty he says it wasn't enough to buy sheet music for a canary bird.

"Why," says he, "some of those horns cost more 'n fifty dollars *apiece*."

"Let's not get that kind of horns," says I. "We can pick out cheaper ones."

"You're like the man who went to buy him a wooden leg, and then decided he'd get him a glass eye instead because it was forty dollars cheaper and could come by mail instead of express," says Catty.

I was kind of excited that day, because my dad went to the city the night before on business, and was coming home late in the afternoon with my clarinet, and I was kind of anxious to see what in tunket a clarinet looked like and what kind of a noise it made.

I wanted to get my hands on that machine and get busy, because, says I to myself, Catty Atkins may have me beat a lot of ways, but I got a feeling I'm a natural musician and can play tunes almost without trying at all. That's what I says to myself, and I made up my mind I'd be walking around playing "Home, Sweet Home" and "The Star-spangled Banner" before Catty got as far as "We Won't Go Home Until Morning." I hoped a clarinet wasn't too big and heavy to carry with comfort, because I'm not much on carrying things. Nope. When I lug anything around with me I want it to be light. I'm not one of these fellows that are all the time bragging about how much they can lift. What do they want to lift for, anyhow? Heavy things was made to let alone, and every time I see a man shouting about how he can lift a barrel of flour up on to his shoulder and walk away with it, why, I just wink the other eye and let him lift. If he gets any credit out of it, he's welcome, but I'll stay less prominent and not have a crick in my back.

Catty and I met the train dad came in on, and he had a little bundle under his arm

about the size of a three-pound black bass, and about the same shape.

"Where's the clarinet?" says I. "You didn't up and forget it, did you?"

"Son," says dad, "I've got it, and I know how I'm going to regret it. I've stood for a lot of capers from you, and I've endured a lot of suffering, but what's coming now is going to be worse than anything that's gone before. Here's your instrument of torture, son, but before you take it I've got just one last, final, emphatic word to say, and that's this. If you ever toot it one toot in the house when your mother or I is there, out you go on your ear. The neighbors 'll have to stand it, because they were so foolish as to buy property near us, but we don't have to stand it. Got the idea? You can play it anywheres out of earshot of the house. Go and toot it on the court-house steps or in the hardware store or up in an airplane—but not within gunshot of your mother and me. . . . I take these precautions," says he, "because I got the man in the music store to play it once. I know what it sounds like."

So he handed it over, and I took off the papers, and inside was a long oval black case, and inside this was a dingus that kind of

resembled a jointed fish-pole with the mumps, and some other kind of a disease with it, like the measles, because it was spotted all over with silver doo-dads to wiggle with your fingers and a row of holes and what-nots. It come in pieces and you had to stick it together, which I did, and the end you put in your mouth was shaped kind of like a pickerel's nose. Hitched to this was a skinny little piece of wood that dad said was the reed and was the business part of the clarinet. The man had showed him how to make a noise on it, and he showed me. You put the pickerel's snout in your mouth, and you didn't exactly blow, but kind of panted like a hot dog on a summer day, and that set the reed to vibrating like the dickens. It vibrated right against my tongue and tickled it like all-get-out.

First off I couldn't make a noise, but pretty soon I fetched a squawk that wasn't very handsome to listen to. Next I got out a pig squeal, and then a racket that made the cold shivers run over you like scratching glass with a nail.

"I think," says Catty, "you better take it out to the cave, like I did my cornet. I see the town marshal looking at you."

"Huh!" says I. "I'll bet in a week he'll be coming around asking me to play tunes for him."

"I brought you an instruction book, too," says dad, and he handed that over. In it was a kind of a portrait of the clarinet with all its keys and things, and alongside, on a thing that looked like a step-ladder, were notes. It showed just what note you squeezed out with each key, and when I saw that I knew I was going to have a snap. All I had to do was just learn that by heart and get all the notes by their first names. Then, when I wanted a note, all I'd have to do would be wiggle a key, and there it was. It was too easy to be any fun.

"I'm going out in the woods and try it now," says I.

I went, but when I came back I had a lot more respect for a clarinet than I started with. Lots of things and lots of folks turn out that way. You see some fellow, and maybe he looks kind of small and peaked and wopsy, and you up and think he doesn't amount to much, and you look down on him kind of pitying. Then, maybe, you ask him what menagerie he escaped from, just to be smart, and all at once he goes to work and

shows you with both fists and all his feet, so that you change all those first notions of him right off. It's better to wait before you make up your mind.

Well, when I came back from the woods I found Catty, and he was all het up.

"What d'you think?" says he.

"I think," says I, "that a clarinet deserves a whole lot of respect."

"No," says he. "A minstrel show stranded over in Hillboro."

"What of it?" says I.

"Well, the sheriff seized all their stuff, and to-morrow there's going to be a sheriff's sale of it."

"I don't want any minstrel show," says I.

"But," says Catty, "there's a fine set of band instruments. Everything we want."

"No!" says I.

"Yes," says he.

"How much 'll they cost?" says I.

"No idea," says he, "but we're going to that auction and we're coming home with those horns."

CHAPTER IV

IT was that afternoon we got acquainted with Torrey Withey, whose father was the millionaire who was getting up the Sunfield band. He drove into our town in an automobile and got out at the hotel, where he kind of sat around on the porch, asking questions of folks. We didn't know who he was at first, but we went walking past to take a look, and he spoke to Catty.

Before he said anything we got a good look at him. He was bigger than either of us and wore a necktie. He had on a few other things, too, but that necktie was what you caught sight of first. You've heard about the chameleon who got on a piece of cloth that was so many colors he flew to pieces trying to match himself to all of them. Well, this wasn't that kind of a tie. It was more so. It looked like a fire in a paint shop, and there was enough of it to make a pair of pants for a dromedary. I bet he bought it by the yard instead of by the tie. When we got beyond looking at this storm signal we

took in what else there was to see. He had on white shoes and white pants and a streaked coat, red and black, and a lavender shirt and lavender socks, and a kind of a hat. It wasn't exactly a hat as we understood hats in our town, but he wore the thing on his head, so we knew he must be using it for a hat. We guessed he must be about seventeen years old and big for his size, especially north of the neck. He was quite considerable of a bigness, and you could see right off that if the shoe clerk told him he wore sevens he'd order eights and a half. The kind of a fellow that was apt to overestimate himself, that's how he looked to us. He just couldn't believe anything about him was as small as anybody else thought it was.

We filled our eyes chuck full of him and were going on about our business, when he called out:

"Hey, kid," says he, "are you Catty Atkins?"

"Yes, sir," says Catty, as meek as Moses, and I looked at him quick to see if he looked sick.

"Come here," says the stranger. "I want to talk to you."

"Lots do," says Catty, "and generally I let

'em. Can I come right up there, or do I have to stay down here?"

"Oh," says the stranger, "you may step right up here."

"Thank you," says Catty. "And may I bring my friend?"

"If you like."

"Thank you again," says Catty. And we went up the steps.

"So you're Catty Atkins," says the boy. "Um . . . !" and he kind of grinned.

"Yes, sir, I—guess so, sir," says Catty.

"I came over on purpose to take a look at you," says the boy.

"Honest Injun?" says Catty.

"My name," says he, "is Torrey Withey. I'm getting up a band over in Sunfield and we're going to win the prize at the state tournament."

"Oh!" says Catty. "I'm glad that's decided. Now folks won't have to wonder about it." He said it so innocent and kind of foolish that Withey never batted an eye.

"I heard," he said, "that you were getting up a band to try for the prize."

"I'm getting up a band," says Catty, "but, now that you've got the prize won, there ain't any use my trying."

"Now that's sensible," says Withey. "What kind of a band are you getting up?"

"One with horns in it and drums and things," says Catty.

"Ours is going to be the Sunfield Silver Military Band," says Withey, "and my father is buying us the finest instruments that can be bought."

"We haven't named our band yet," says Catty, "and we're going to have any kind of instruments we can get. But you ought to see some of our fellows. I'll bet they can blow loud."

"There's more to a band than blowing loud," says Withey.

"I'll bet, just the same, you can blow loud," says Catty, and Withey never saw what Catty was getting at at all. "I'll bet," says Catty, "you're one of the loudest blowers in this part of the country."

"My father," says Withey, "is going to take all my band camping at the lake, and a hired teacher."

"That 'll be nice," says Catty.

"Where are you going to get your instruments?" Withey wanted to know.

"We haven't found out yet," says Catty.

"They're expensive."

"Maybe we can find cheap ones."

"I don't believe kids like you can ever afford it."

"Maybe," says Catty.

"If I were you I'd get up something less expensive than a band."

"Maybe that's good advice," says Catty. "Did you buy that tie ready made or have it made on purpose for you?"

Withey got kind of red and looked at Catty sharp, but Catty looked so foolish and innocent he could see he wasn't being made fun of, so he says, "I have all my ties made to order."

"I'll bet," says Catty, "the folks that make 'em have to do it in a dark room, or maybe they wear smoked glasses."

"Don't get fresh," says Withey.

"I wasn't, sir," says Catty, kind of bearing down on the sir so it was noticeable. "I was just thinking out loud. We don't see many ties like that around here. Was it expensive?"

"It cost five dollars," says Withey.

"For one?" says Catty.

"Of course."

"That," says Catty, "is more than I pay for a pair of pants."

"Quite likely," says Withey.

"I'll bet your father's awful rich," says Catty.

"He's a millionaire."

"And he just up and gives you everything you want, don't he?"

"I get anything I ask for."

"Did you ask for that hat," says Catty, "or do you have to wear it for some reason?"

"This," says Withey, "is a very stylish hat."

"I bet you," says Catty. "And your dad 'll give you anything you ask for?"

"Yes."

"I know something he couldn't give you," Catty says.

"What?"

"I'll tell you after a while," Catty says, "and maybe, anyhow, you wouldn't want it if he could give it to you."

"If I wanted it, he would."

"That settles *that,* then. When's your band going to start?"

"It's started."

"Uniforms and all?"

"Everything we need."

"And a hired teacher?"

"The best in the city."

"Costs a lot, I guess."

"He's very expensive," says Withey.

"He's going to teach you, is he?"

"Me?"

"Sure."

"Of course!"

"Um . . . ! Then," says Catty, "I bet he earns every cent he gets."

"What's that? What d'you mean?"

"Nothing. And you don't want me to get up a band, eh?"

"You couldn't ever afford it."

"But if we could afford it?"

"You couldn't win the prize."

"We might. We're going to have a teacher and everything."

"Where 'll you get a teacher?"

"Oh, he just kind of volunteered."

"What," says Withey, "will you take not to get up a band?"

"A lot," says Catty. "Why?"

"Because," says Withey, "I want to have the only boys' band in that tournament."

"Oh!" says Catty. "Now isn't that too bad?"

"What?"

"That you can't," says Catty.

"Maybe we can make a deal."

"That," says Catty, "is something else your father can't buy for you."

"What else can't he buy for me?"

"Brains," says Catty.

Well, you should have seen Withey. He caught on then that Catty had been making fun of him all along, and he was so mad he all but turned around and bit himself in the back of the neck. He came close to choking, and I didn't know but we'd have to lay him on his back and loosen that tie of his and fan him. He just couldn't think up anything to say, and he sat there working his jaws and kind of clawing the air, and then he says: "I'll show you. . . . I'll show you."

"You've shown us quite a lot," says Catty. "About all the human eye can stand for one day. Now, take that tie. Why, a fellow couldn't bear to see more 'n one of them in twenty-four hours! And that thing you wear on your head and call a hat! Say, I just love that hat. Take you as a whole, from top to toe, and you're something. And on top of it, you got the face to come over here and try to get me to give up my band, just because you're afraid we'll win that prize away from you. . . . It's lucky you're going to have money left you."

"Why?" says Withey.

"Because," says Catty, "you'd starve to death if you had to make it yourself."

By this time Withey kind of caught up with himself and he commenced to talk. "I'll teach you to make fun of me, you poor fish!" says he. "I'll show you whether you can get up a band when I don't want you to. I'm after you now. You watch out. I'll show you what happens to kids that get in my way."

"Now," says Catty, "I'm beginning to be glad you're alive. Maybe you'll make things interesting. I'm afraid not, though. If you were only smart. I like a good fight, but a scrap with you would be taking a bone away from a two weeks' puppy."

"You wait and see."

"Better get your dad to help you," says Catty.

"I will," says Withey.

"Then," says Catty, "better warn papa to wear a football suit, 'cause he's apt to get bumped."

"If there weren't two of you," says Withey.

"Take your pick of us," Catty says; "the other 'll stay out of it."

"I shan't get into a fight in a strange town."

"I wouldn't, either, if I was you. . . . Well, we got to be getting along. Nice of you to come over. Come often. Bring your pa with you some day."

"If I do bring him, you'll be sorry."

"If you bring him," says Catty, "*somebody* 'll be sorry." And with that we walked down off the hotel porch and went up the street, and we never took one look behind us at Withey.

"Well," says I, "it looks like something has started."

"Hurrah!" says Catty.

CHAPTER V

"HOW much money's the band got?" Catty asked me.

"Fifty-seven dollars and thirty-two cents," says I.

"It isn't enough to go to that auction with," says Catty, "but the auction's to-morrow and we can't wait to raise more. I guess you and I'll have to advance the rest. It's lucky we got it."

We had quite a lot of money in the bank, we made the summer before out of our business, and I thought the same way Catty did, that we couldn't find a better use for some of it than to invest it in horns and things—and, anyhow, if the band turned out to amount to anything, we'd get it back. So, the next morning, we drew out a hundred dollars, which gave us over a hundred and fifty, and hired a rig and drove over to Hillboro. The auction of the minstrel show was to be at eleven o'clock at the court house.

We nosed around and found out all we could about it. It didn't look like anybody

was there to do any serious bidding, though a lot of folks would buy just because it was an auction. I never saw the beat of the way auctions get people. Just because something's being sold off by an auctioneer, it seems like folks just *have* to buy. It doesn't matter whether they want anything or not, or how useless what they buy is going to be. Why, once I saw Old-maid Pilkins bid in a meerschaum pipe. I'll bet you there isn't anything that can't be sold at auction. We felt kind of comfortable about our chances, and figured we'd pick up a whole outfit of instruments pretty cheap—and then something happened to upset our apple cart. It upset it all over the place, and that was Torrey Withey in his automobile.

He drove up to the court house a little after ten, and stopped his car and looked around him like it was his court house and he thought of having all the crowd kicked off his property. And then he saw us and grinned.

"I kind of figured," says he, " I could put a spoke in your wheel over here. Cheap band instruments, eh? Well, Atkins, if you get an instrument here to-day, you'll pay money for it, you can bet."

"Huh!" says Catty.

"I'm going to buy these for my band to practice on," says Withey, "and we'll save our fine instruments just to play in public."

"Maybe," says Catty.

"You don't think you've got money enough to bid against *me!*"

"Not money enough," says Catty, and then he turned and walked off with me, and you can believe he looked pretty serious. There was no telling how much money that Withey boy had, but it was safe to guess he had a lot more than we did.

"Something," says Catty, "has got to be done."

"And done quick," says I.

"Lemme think," says he, and he went and sat down on a hitching block and began pulling his ear and squinting his eyes and wiggling around like he does when he's got a problem on hand. And I waited to see what would come of it, if anything.

"Come on," says he. "Maybe it won't work, but, anyhow, it'll make him doggone uncomfortable. Hurry up. We've only got a half hour."

"Where?" says I.

"Anywhere," says he, "where there's chickens."

"Chickens?" says I.

"Yes," says he. "You know. Those two-legged birds you see around. You eat 'em fried Sundays."

"Huh!" says I. "I saw a hen yard just around the corner."

"Fine," says he. "I hope somebody mean owns 'em."

So we hustled off and around through a lane, and, sure enough, there in a lot about a dozen hens were pecking away. White ones they were—Orpingtons, I guess, though hens and I aren't so well acquainted I'm sure about any of them.

"Now," says Catty, "you sit and watch. When dad and I were tramps I learned a lot about catching chickens. Had to."

So I watched. I don't know how he managed it, but in about a minute he sneaked a hen close to some bushes, and the hen never had a word to say. He brought it back and hauled a gunny sack out from under his coat—it was the one we brought oats in for our horse—and stuffed the hen into it. Then he went back and caught three more, and stuffed them into the sack.

"Now," says he, "you count five hundred, slow. Then you go and bang on that door and tell the folks you just saw a boy get away with some of their chickens. Show 'em where I ran. I'll be by the court house and I'll motion to you where to look for the chickens."

I did like he said, and when I'd done counting five hundred, I ran up and pounded on the back door, and a woman came that was about six feet tall and six inches wide, and she had eyes that kind of popped out like a horse's and her hair was done in a little fried cake on the top. She looked sour enough to curdle milk.

"Ma'am," says I as polite as butter, "I just saw a boy grab four of your chickens and shove 'em in a sack and run off toward the court house."

She reached for me, but I dodged.

"Boy," says she, "what be you up to?"

"I'm telling you about your chickens," says I.

"Honest Injun?" says she.

"Yes," says I.

She grabbed for a broom and busted right out and past me. "I'll chicken him," says she. "You jest show me where he run to."

I pointed, and off she scooted with her skirts a-flapping and her ears kind of waving, and all the time she kept talking to herself about what she was going to do to the boy that had her chickens, and she waved that broom around just like she meant business, which she did. And she could run. Honest, I had to do all that was in me to keep up with her, and then I almost didn't. She was about the most serious-minded-looking woman I ever saw, and you could tell right off that she'd set her heart on catching that boy. I says to myself that I was glad I wasn't the one she was chasing, because, from the look on her face, she was bound to catch him if she chased him to China, and when she got him she'd make him wish he'd twiddled his fingers at a cyclone instead of monkeying with her.

We rounded the corner full tilt, and there was the crowd and there was Catty, and he pointed at the tonneau of Withey's car, and then I understood.

"Ma'am," I yelled at her, "I'll bet if you look in the back of that car you'll find your chickens."

She let out a kind of a war whoop and charged like a regiment of cavalry, and

when she got to Withey's car she didn't wait to open any doors or use any steps. No, sir, she just kind of swarmed over the back, and there, sure enough, was her bagful of chickens. She grabbed it.

About this time young Withey discovered something was going on and turned around.

"Hey!" says he to the woman, "what 're you doing in my car?"

"As soon as I git a grip on these here chickens," she says, "I aim to show you. Consarn ye! Go stealin' a widder's livin', will ye? Go smouchin' the hens that lays the aigs that buys me the bread of life. I'll teach ye, ye automobile-ridin', chicken'-stealin' dude."

With that she got a good grip on the hens with her left hand and swung her broom with her right.

"I'm a-goin' to rip that there necktie clean off'n ye," she says, "and use it to hang ye in a hayloft. Take that, and that, and that!" and at every word she swiped Withey with the brushy part of the broom; and he let out a squawk.

"Hey!" he says, "what you doin'? Hey! Stop that! Hey!"

"Chicken thief!" she yells, and the crowd

begins to gather and laugh and kind of cheer her on. At that she sailed into Withey more enthusiastic than ever, and he began to holler help and say something about a lunatic, and that made her madder than ever.

"Lunatic, be I? Small wonder if I was one, with city dudes a-stealin' my hens and a-carryin' 'em off in gunny sacks. I'll teach you how crazy I be!" And she reached for his collar. But he dodged, and then she swiped him with the sackful of chickens, and he let out another howl and jumped and tripped and fell, and she right after him. And he scrambled to his feet and hollered help, but she drove the holler right back into him with the broom, and so he ran.

He went scooting through the crowd, which was hollering and laughing and cheering on the woman, but she didn't pay any attention, because she had business on her mind that needed looking after. I'll say this for Withey, he was a good runner, but he couldn't do more than keep just free of the sweep of that broom. She never let up, and the last we saw of them they were tearing across a field toward the woods.

HE PUT 'EM ALL UP TOGETHER AND SOME FUNNY FELLER IN THE CROWD HOLLERED, "FIFTY CENTS."

"I don't guess," says Catty, "that he'll feel like attending any auctions to-day."

"No," says I; "and there's the auctioneer now, and he's going to start."

He started telling about what he had to sell, and it was thirty band instruments, and thirty uniforms, and a lot of costumes and other theatrical stuff that we didn't have any interest in. He said he was going to offer the instruments in a bunch, but if they didn't sell that way he'd offer them one at a time. Which he did. He put 'em all up and asked for bids, and some funny feller hollered fifty cents, and then Catty says twenty-five dollars, and another fellow said thirty dollars, and Catty said thirty-five dollars, and so on. And at last Catty says seventy-five dollars, and nobody said anything else, so the whole kaboodle was knocked down to him, and our band was fixed for business.

"Say," says I, "I wonder if we couldn't bid in those uniforms, and then have 'em altered cheap by our tailor."

"Good idee," says Catty, and when the bidding on them commenced he got the whole lot for fifty-two dollars, which was pretty good.

So that was that. We now had uniforms

and instruments, and we hired a wagon to cart them home. Not another sign of Withey did we see, and I wondered how long he could hold out running as fast as he was when I saw him last. At the rate he was scooting I'll bet he was as much as a dozen miles away.

It took us an hour and a half to drive home, and there we unloaded all the instruments at Catty's house and set out to notify the band that we had them. Kids came running from every direction, and in about two minutes a kid was sitting on every blade of grass, trying to make a noise on some kind of a horn or drum or something, and the general noise that come out of it was enough to make you think something out of the ordinary had happened. It had.

Our town was the proud and happy possessor of a band.

CHAPTER VI

YOU can believe that when the kids in town heard we had our horns and things, and that the tailor was cutting down regular uniforms with more gold fixings across the fronts of them than you could mine out of Alaska, they all wanted to be in it. Every kid, with wind enough to blow out a candle came around to see how he could get into the band, and that, to Catty's mind, was fine.

"We'll put 'em on the waiting list," says he, "and use 'em to make the band work hard and 'tend to business. So long as we know just where we can fill every fellow's place, every fellow is apt to try to hang on to his job."

Well, we had Hans Knudsen over to the next meeting, and he sort of selected what horns what kids were to play, and we served them out, and Hans gave a kind of a general lesson to everybody all together and appointed special times for each kid, so that everyone in the band got a real half-hour private lesson every week.

"But," says Hans, "lessons she bane no goot af you be lazy. No. You should practus perty goot time every day. I watch, you bet. Dose boy dat ain't practus, he's bane kick oot of dis band so queek his hair bane curl oop in choonks."

Old Hans meant business, all right, and you could see it by the way he waggled his whiskers. When it came to whiskers, Hans wasn't much on length, but he was some pumpkins on thickness. He had more whiskers to the square inch of chin than any man I ever saw, and every whisker was as straight as if you'd drawn it with a ruler and as stiff as a ramrod. Catty said he must cut each one of them separate with a wire cutter. He was built like a big barrel with two kegs fastened on to the bottom of it for legs and another one for a head. Up and down he wasn't much more than he was across, and when he spread his legs and let loose all the wind there was in him into the mouthpiece of a cornet he almost tooted the keys off of it. I never saw him smile and I never heard of his laughing. Not that he was sorrowful, because he wasn't, but he never heard of anything being funny. No, sir. Since the day he was born nobody had

ever told him why folks laughed. But he was all right, and being serious minded is a good thing for a band instructor to be. Take a band teacher with a sense of humor and he wouldn't be any good. He wouldn't last. He'd laugh himself to death before the first week was over.

But Hans is important only kind of incidentally just now. Catty and I and all the rest of us had more important things to take up our minds for a week or so, and anybody who thinks we didn't have trouble on our hands don't know what trouble is. The thing started the first evening all the boys had their instruments and commenced to toot.

"Wee-wee," says Catty to me, "let's take a scout around town to see if the fellows are practicing."

"Fine," says I. "But some of 'em are. I can hear 'em."

You could. But we walked around, anyhow. There were thirty different blocks in our town that had band instruments going in them. Thirty. Every time you turned a corner a fresh kind of noise rushed out and banged you in the ear. It wasn't like a noise in one place, but kind of as if some-

body had blown up the worst noise in the world with dynamite and it had come down in little chunks all over the landscape. Men and women were standing in their front yards talking about it, and a lot of them didn't seem to be pleased. No, sir. I heard men say things about it that no decent, patriotic citizen ought to say about a crowd of boys who were working so hard to do something to put their town on the map. I even heard one man say that now he bet the taxpayers would vote for a police force.

We met Town-marshal Hickey trying to hurry four ways at once. He had a worried look like a dog that's buried six bones and couldn't make up his mind which one to go and dig up first. He was standing on a corner and turning around and around almost like a top.

"Evening, Marshal," says Catty.

"Don't evenin' me," says he. "Say, what's all this blattin' about? Who started it? That's what I aim to find out. If I kin git my hands on to the feller that caused this here breach of the peace, I'm a-goin' to do suthin' to him he'll remember till his dyin' day."

"I would, if I was you," says Catty. "What is it, anyhow?"

"Who in tunket kin tell?" says Mr. Hickey. "Jest listen."

Catty listened. "I don't hear anything," says he.

The marshal looked at him and then he looked at me. "Don't hear anything?" says he.

"Not a sound," says Catty.

"D'ye mean to tell me you don't hear no caterwaulin' and boomin' and ump-ahin'?"

"I was just thinking," said Catty, "what a nice quiet evening it is."

I saw a worried look come into the marshal's eye. "You," he says to me, "don't you hear anythin'?"

"Jest a few crickets chirruping," says I.

"Crickets!" says the marshal. "If them I hear is crickets then I don't never want to git stepped on by a elephant. A cricket that could make a holler like that there would have to be bigger 'n the railroad station."

"Maybe," says Catty, helpful-like, "it's just a ringing in your ears. I have them sometimes."

Just then one of the kids broke loose with

a trombone, and if you know anything about music you know that a new beginner on a trombone can make the most painful-sounding noise that ever come ripping into your ears. It was one of those noises that ripped and tore through the air and had rough edges on it.

"There," says the marshal, "that's the worst yit. Jest listen to that one."

"Can't make out what you mean," says Catty. "Don't you think maybe we better walk along home with you? I'll bet you aren't feeling just well to-night. Maybe, now, if you'd lie down——"

"If," said the marshal, "I got it into my head you was tryin' to make fun of me, consarn me if I wouldn't run you bow-legged. You might fool me on smells, 'cause my nose hain't so keen as it was once, on account of that job I had in the glue factory that clean ruined me for smellin' purposes. But my ear! Say, I kin hear a pin drop on a pillow a block away. . . . And, besides, I hain't the only feller in town that's hearin' this din. No, siree. Fer half an hour I didn't do nothin' but answer my telephone when folks was callin' up to complain they was bein'

drove crazy and to invoke the aid of the law."

Invoking the aid of the law was a favorite phrase of the marshal's, and he used it a considerable bit.

"More 'n forty-'leven folks has called me to come to forty-'leven different places to abate nuisances," says he. "If I had a force of twenty constables a-workin' under me, I couldn't do the half of what's been demanded of me to-night."

"Then," says Catty, "what do you aim to do?"

"If this keeps up," said the marshal, "I'm a-goin' to git me a blanket and go off about five miles into the woods to git a wink of sleep."

Well, sir, just then we saw something coming, and jumped aside just in time. It was a kid with an alto horn clutched in his fingers, and his hair streaking back behind him, he was running so fast; and right behind him were two men legging it after him with all their might.

"It looks," says Catty to me, "as if Skinny Higgins wasn't so awful popular in his neighborhood."

"I guess maybe," says I, "you and I had

better kind of not be conspicuous for a while."

"It looks so," says Catty, "but we can sneak around back ways and find out what's going on."

The next thing we come to, up a lane, was Tommy Parr sitting on the ridgepole of his barn, with his big brother and his sister and two neighbors' hired men throwing things at him. Tommy didn't seem to mind, though. He just dodged around the cupola when he had to and kept on squawking the most dreadful squawks you ever heard.

"Now there," says Catty, "is a kid that 'll be a valuable musician. He sticks to it. Nothing interrupts his practicing."

Around the next corner we saw a dozen people gathered in front of Tansey's ice house, and they were battering on it with scantlings and things like they meant to tear it down. But whoever was inside didn't seem to hear. There was at least two kids there, one with a trombone and one with a cornet, and the noises that came out was almost enough to justify the violence of the mob that was attacking them. It didn't seem like a good place for Catty and I to hang

around, so we mogged along away from there.

I'll bet we saw ten kids running for their lives, and I distinctly heard Mrs. Whiffet tell her husband that their son was never to be allowed in the house again with that awful thing he made the noise on. She said he could take his choice between playing on that horn and eating. I knew her son, and he wasn't the kind to go hungry.

"Catty," says I, "I guess the band isn't starting off so popular as we'd like to see it."

"How," says he, "do folks think bands happen? Do they have an idea a band just gets together and begins to play tunes? Don't band men have to learn? Say!"

"You can't pick any fight with me," says I. "I didn't do it."

"Makes me sick," says he. "Folks ought to have a little patience."

"What d'ye suppose 'll come of it?" says I.

"We'll have to do like all folks have in history when they've started something new that folks didn't approve of. Like new religions or new kinds of politics, or anything like that. We'll have to stick to it, no matter what persecutions we have to undergo."

"You mean those martyrs?" says I.

"Sure," says Catty.

"I wouldn't admire to be a martyr," says I.

"You got to," says he, and his eyes was kind of shining. "When you get an idea, and you know it's a good idea, and it's going to work out for everybody's benefit, why, it's your duty to stick to it till you bust. We know this band's going to be a good thing for this town, and everybody's going to enjoy it, and it's going to bring prosperity to everybody and advertise this section of the country——"

"It's advertising, all right," I says. "I guess there isn't anybody in town who doesn't know we're getting up a band."

"What I mean," says he, "is that we got to have enough backbone to stick it out and see it through, no matter what we run up against, nor how discouraging it is, nor what suffering and cruelty and torture they put on to us."

"Fine," says I, "but I never could see how those martyrs enjoyed being tortured. I've seen pictures of 'em laughing and singing while they were being burned at the stake, and I never did believe those pictures. Just

you burn your finger good and see how hard you laugh and sing."

"It's their courage that does it," says he. "They were so strong for their cause that they were tickled to death to die for it."

"Maybe," says I, "but you got another guess coming if you think I'm going to die to get a chance to play on a clarinet—and, anyhow, what good could it do? If I was dead I couldn't blow on it, anyhow. Now I'll bet you the folks in this town won't stand for our having any band. They won't let us."

"They can't stop us," says Catty. "I'll bet you they can't. It's legal to have a band. Remember what it said in the Constitution of the United States, and that's the heftiest law there is—it says that every man is entitled to the pursuit of happiness."

"But it didn't say anything about his being entitled to *catch* it," says I.

He didn't pay any attention to me. "And," says he, "if having a band isn't a pursuit of happiness, then I want to know what is."

"Yes," says I, "but if a thing that's a pursuit of happiness for one man is a pursuit of misery for another fellow—then what? I don't believe any fellow is entitled to pursue

happiness so fast or so noisy that he makes other folks miserable."

"Um . . . !" says Catty. "Now that's somethin' to think about. Never occurred to me just that way. How'd you come to think about it?"

"Well," says I, "it didn't sound reasonable that any law would let thirty kids pursue happiness down the mouthpieces of horns so that they made a couple of thousand other folks froth at the mouth and want to commit murder."

"But we got a right to have a band," says Catty, "and we'll have one. You watch. And the day 'll come when this town 'll thank us for it."

"Maybe," says I, "but while we're waiting for that time we better take back ways and not let folks catch us. I'm going home quiet and stay out of sight, and we'll see what happens to-morrow. I feel in my bones that something's going to happen."

And I was right. It did.

CHAPTER VII

I SLEPT kind of late next morning, and my dad woke me up. He was grinning like he enjoyed something.

"If I was you, son," says he, "I'd eat breakfast and sneak out kind of private, and I'd keep going till I got out in the country," he says.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"This town is looking for you and Catty, and if what I hear is any indication, they're going to hang you to a lamp-post if they catch you."

"Sounds bad," says I. "Maybe I better warn Catty, and we'll provision the cave and live out there a spell."

"Anyhow," says dad, "it's certain music isn't popular. You and Catty better pick out some other and more silent branch of art. You might try oil-painting, but then you'd probably smear the paint all over the neighborhood and make nuisances of yourselves."

"Dad," say I, "isn't it legal to have a band? Catty says the Constitution says we can."

"The Constitution says you can have lots of things," says dad, "if you can get away with them."

"But we got to have a band," says I. "What 'll we do?"

Dad grinned again. "I leave that to you and Catty. You're more ingenious than I am —and a lot more willing to take chances," he says. "But till public opinion has a chance to cool down I'd keep out of sight."

I did. I sneaked over to Catty's by the back way, and every time I saw a soul I hid behind a fence. Old Justice-of-the-peace Bowles came along, almost concealed behind his whiskers, what wasn't hidden by his eyebrows, for he was scowling like anything, and he was making straight for his office. Then I saw the president of the Town Board, and he looked mad, and I says to myself that I bet the board had a meeting about us and that we were in for trouble.

So I got Catty and told him, and he looked kind of worried and says we better spy out what the enemy was doing.

"They're going to persecute us," says he, "like the Spanish Inquisition, and they're most likely going to have a meeting in the torture chamber to decide whether they'll

break us on the rack or boil us in oil. So," says he, "if we're going to save our confederates in the conspiracy from worse than death, we better get busy right away."

"What conspiracy?" says I.

He looked at me a minute like he couldn't believe his ears, and then I knew he was pretending again. When he started out pretending he did it so hard he believed what he was making believe. Yes, sir, right now he believed there was some sort of a conspiracy and that we were really in danger of being burned up at the stake or something awful, and he couldn't understand my not knowing it, too. But I caught on.

"We better sneak down to Bowles's office," says I, "for that's where the enemy will meet."

"Good idea," says he, so we took a roundabout way, and finally, after passing through some awful dangers and having a lot of hairbreadth escapes, we got into the little yard at the back of Justice Bowles's place. Sure enough, there was most of the Town Board, and they were mad. You could see how mad they were.

"That Atkins boy is at the bottom of it," says Mr. Green.

"Then the Moore kid won't be far away," says the justice.

"Where in tunket did they get the horns?" says another man.

"I hear," says the justice, "they bought 'em at auction."

"They sound like it," says Mr. Green. "D'you suppose it's just an outbreak, or is it a permanent disease?"

"I never heard tell," says the justice, "of anybody gittin' well that got bit with the brass-band bug. No, sir. Once a feller gets the itch to play in a band and waller around in parades, an' nothin' 'll cure him. You kin kill him, mebby, but you can't ever make him the same ag'in."

"We got to take some action," says the president. "The town 'll be drove deef."

"If it's going to keep up," said Mr. Green, "I hope deafness comes quickly and mercifully."

"They got uniforms, too," says the justice.

"Then," says Mr. Green, "I guess we'll have to shoot them all. I know if I was a kid and had a horn and a uniform, nothing short of a firing squad would keep me from using them."

"You talk," says the president, "like you was in sympathy with this here nuisance."

"I shouldn't call it sympathy," says Mr. Green.

"What action kin we take?" says the president. "We got to be legal."

"I been lookin' up the law," says the justice, "under the headin' of 'Brass Bands,' but there don't seem to be no sich headin' in Tiffany's Justices' Guide."

"Try the criminal law," says Mr. Green.

"Don't seem like blowin' a horn come under that head," says the justice. "Sounds more to me like mebby it was malicious mischief."

"Maybe it's slander," says Mr. Green.

Well, for twenty minutes the justice jammed around the law books and read snatches out of them, but it looked like none of 'em fitted our case. You could see the board was getting kind of discouraged, and Mr. Green says maybe they better give up trying to stop us by legal means and organize some vigilantes.

"I got an idea," says the president.

"Let's have it," says the justice.

"Minors," says the president.

"What kind of miners?"

"Age minors, kids that hain't of age yit."

"Yes? What about 'em?"

"They," says the president, "is possessed of certain disabilities and disadvantages not appertainin' to folks that has come of legal age and votin' intelligence."

"True," says Mr. Green.

"F'r instance," says the president, "they can't vote, and they have to have guardeens over their proppity, and sich like. Now my idee is this, that we set down and pass a law that no minor kin own or operate a horn or other wind instrument within the municipal limits of this here village, and that so to do be made an offense again' the law, punishable by fine and imprisonment."

"Sounds feasible," says the justice.

"Then," says the president, "lets us up and pass sich an ordinance."

Catty looked at me and I looked at him, and it seemed right then and there as if our goose was cooked.

"'Tain't constitutional," says he in a whisper.

And then the president up and said something. "Maybe this here law ain't legal," he said, "but one of them disabilities of minors is that they can't sue or be sued with-

out havin' a guardeen. So we're all right. To be a guardeen a person's got to be sane, and no sane man or woman livin' in this town would act as a guardeen to test out this here law. So we got 'em comin' and goin'."

"High handed," says Catty in a whisper. "This here is tyranny, and we're justified in startin' a revolution. These men are regular George the Thirds." His face got all excited, and he looked so happy I didn't know what to make of it. "There's an idea," says he. "We'll start us a revolution, and seize the town and maybe imprison the tyrants. Cracky! that 'll be about the greatest thing we ever did if we can get away with it. We'll seize the town and hold it, and we'll make kids the officers, and we'll run it the way it ought to be run for kids. And then," says he, "maybe the revolution will spread all over the country, and the kids will march on Washington and be Senators and President and Supreme Court and everything. It's the grandest notion I ever thought up. Why, it's got playing in a band beat a mile!"

"We never could make it stick," says I.

"We kin try," says he. "The first step

is to find some way to beat this move of theirs, and then we can organize a real conspiracy—while they think we aren't going to do anything but play in a band. And when we get all organized we'll march in with band playing and just grab all the power there is."

"One of them coop dates," says I.

"A what?" says he.

"What Napoleon Third did in Paris when he got made Emperor."

"Oh," says he, "you mean a *coup d'état.*"

"Coo detay," says I. "That hain't sensible."

"It's French," says Catty, "and that's how it's pronounced."

"Then," says I, "I'm glad I'm American." But I'll bet they don't call things by those funny names when they're talking to each other private. No, siree. They just make up those silly words when there's foreigners around, to play a joke on 'em. Why, the French are smart people! It stands to reason they'd talk a language to each other that they could understand."

"They understand French among themselves just like we understand English," says he.

"You can't fool me," says I. "I've heard 'em talk, and I couldn't make out a word, but just jabber."

"That's what English sounds like to them."

"English," says I, "always sounds like English. It's got to. If I say 'pig' it's got to sound pig whether a Chinaman or a Frenchman or a feller from Timbuctoo is listening to it."

"But it don't mean anything to them."

"It means pig," says I, "and you can't talk me out of it."

"All right," says he. "But what 're we to do about these tyrants?"

"We can't massacre 'em," says I. "It 'd be against the law."

"In a revolution," says he, "you don't have to bother about the law—not if it's successful. Of course, if your revolution fails, you get shot."

"Um . . . !" says I. "That's a point worth considering."

"You're not afraid?" says he.

"Of being shot?" says I. "Of course not! Whatever made you think I was afraid? Not me."

"But," says he, "before we revolute, or get

shot or anything, we got to circumvent this tyrannical law, and the way to do it," he says, "is to get a lawyer."

"I never heard," says I, "of any patriots starting a revolution by hiring them an attorney."

"There's different ways," says he, "and a man is justified in trying any of them."

"All right," says I, "but remember, it's your idea. If I was starting a revolt I wouldn't have any lawyers in it at all."

"There's that young fellow that moved to town this spring and got him an office over by the bank building. We'll try him. Probably he hasn't been here long enough to get his patriotism undermined by the wiles of these tyrants."

"Go to it," says I, "but remember, I warned you."

So we went over to the bank building, and we did it pretty cautious. Every place we passed there was two or three folks discussing our band, and nobody seemed to be giving three cheers for it or for us. It was a lot safer to keep out of sight, anyway, until we got our rebel army organized in force so we could stand off attack.

We made a dash around the last corner

and up the stairs to young Lawyer Parker's office, and rapped on the door. A voice inside told us to come in, so we opened the door. There sat Lawyer Parker with a big law book on his lap, and he didn't appear to notice us at first, he was so busy. He kept turning pages and reading and then making notes, and never in my life did I see a young man that looked so important. Then he looked up and his face kind of fell.

"Darn!" says he. "I thought you were clients."

"Is that why *you* were so busy?" says Catty.

He smiled, Lawyer Parker did, and I kind of liked him right off. "Well," he said, "a young lawyer's got to think of appearances."

"Well," says Catty, "begin thinking about 'em again, because we are clients."

"May I ask," says Mr. Parker, "the nature of your case?"

"It's a revolution," says I.

"Hush!" says Catty. "He isn't a conspirator. We haven't even sounded out his feelings toward the tyrants yet."

"You don't need to," says Lawyer Parker. "If there's a tyrant anywheres around, you may depend on it I'm against him."

At that I sat down and felt a lot better, because anybody can see that a revolution that started out with the advice of a lawyer that could be trusted, and that hated tyrants, would be a lot better revolution than one that just went at it haphazard and aimless.

CHAPTER VIII

"THE Town Board," says Catty, "are passing a law to make it an offense for a boy to play on a band instrument."

"No," said Mr. Parker. "That is tyranny, isn't it? I call it an invasion of a sacred and vested right. I suppose they're doing it on account of the rather scattered serenade we had last night."

"We just got our horns," says I, "and naturally everybody wanted to try them out."

"Naturally," says Mr. Parker.

"And so," says Catty, "we want to hire you for our lawyer."

"Retain is the word," says Mr. Parker, gravely. "But am I to be general counsel for the band or for the revolution?"

"First," says Catty, "for the band. Then, if you do all right, we'll take you for the revolution, and maybe make you chief justice or something when it comes off."

"Fine. Chief justice is a job I've always hankered for. Now where do we start?"

"If we knew," says Catty, "we wouldn't have had to retain us a lawyer."

"True," says Mr. Parker. "Um . . . ! Now we'll consider first the matter of jurisdiction, and there, I fancy, lies the solution of our difficulty. When we determine how much territory the Town Board covers, then we can be certain where we can or cannot play on horns. Do you follow me?"

"Only part way," says Catty.

"For example," says our lawyer, "China can't pass a law that has any effect in the United States. If they should enact a statute compelling every man, woman, and child to wear a red pigtail, the law would have to be obeyed in China, but over here we would pay no attention to it. Is it clear? Therefore, if our village legislators enact a tyrannical law, it must be obeyed only in such circumscribed territory as the said legislators have authority over, and that is, as you will readily perceive, the limits of the village. Consequently, while you cannot toot bugles in the village, you can toot them in any other village, or, if you know where the village boundary is, you can step one inch on the outside of it and blow to your hearts' content."

"There," says Catty to me. "Didn't I tell you the thing to do was to get legal advice?"

"You did," says I.

"Where," says Catty, "is the village boundary?"

"That," said our lawyer, "is a matter to be determined by a surveyor and not a lawyer."

"Have we got to retain surveyors and doctors and dentists and the whole kaboodle?"

"The very best revolutions do," says Mr. Parker.

"Well," says Catty, "I'll bet I can find out where the village ends without hiring any more help.... Much obliged, Mr. Parker. How much do we owe you?"

"In matters of this sort," says he, "I prefer to render my bill annually. You will be requiring my services frequently. If you hold me on a yearly retainer it is better for both of us. You will be in no danger of losing your lawyer to your enemies, and I will be in no danger of losing a profitable client. ... Is that satisfactory?"

"Perfectly," says Catty, "but we got

things to do now, so good-by, and you better come to hear the band practice."

"Thank you," says Mr. Parker, "but I think I'd rather wait until you have got along a little further. Good-by."

We went out, and took good pains not to let anybody see us on the street. When we got to a safe place we sat down to talk.

"What I want to know," says Catty, "is not where all the village boundary is, but where the closest part of it is. Um . . . ! I wonder if Big Hole Island is in it?"

"Best way," says I, "is to go and ask."

"Come on," says he. So we set off for the island, which is in the river and just a little ways from the town, not much of a walk. It isn't a very big island, and not far from shore, but there's a kind of a home-made bridge going across, and a man by the name of Melchisideck Lovey lives there and kind of farms some and fishes some and kills him frogs and gets along shiftless. We went across his bridge and found his shanty, but he wasn't in it. Then we explored some, and after a while we found him sitting under a tree alongside a deep hole, fishing for bass.

"Howdy do, Mr. Lovey?" says Catty.

"Speak a mite louder," says he, "on account of me bein' slightly hard of hearin'."

"Now," says Catty to me, "here's luck."

"How so?" says I.

"Watch and see," says Catty. And then he turned and hollered at Mr. Lovey, "Are you in the village limits?"

"No, young feller, I hain't got no gimlets."

"Not gimlets—*limits* . . . boundaries, you know. Is this island in town?"

"Oh! In town, ye say? No, 'tain't in town, and it hain't never a-goin' to be so long's I keep my strength. I won't have no dealin's with that town."

"It's full of tyrants," says Catty.

"No," says Mr. Lovey, "but there's lots of blackberries."

That didn't sound exactly like the right answer, to me, but Catty let it slide, so I did the same. But all the same I'd like to know what blackberries and tyrants got to do with each other.

"They used to have picnics here, didn't they?" says Catty. He yelled it so loud Mr. Lovey heard the first time.

"Lots of 'em," says he. "Built a kind of pavilion, like, and I used to rent it out. Run

a lemonade stand, too, when they was doin's here. But since the lake got opened up everybody goes out there and this island's gone plumb to the dogs as a business proposition. It hain't nothin' but just a place any more."

"Would a band disturb you?" says Catty.

"The' hain't no noise thet 'll disturb me," says Mr. Lovey, as proud as a peacock.

Now there's a funny thing. If a man's deaf he wants to be deafer than anybody else. Pride's kind of hard to understand. If you got to be cross-eyed, you want to have the highest-class pair of cross-eyes in the world. And so on. Maybe it's a good idea. Anyhow, Mr. Lovey was mighty proud of how deaf he was, and he set in to explain it to us with examples of what he couldn't hear.

"Now," says he, "you wouldn't credit it, mebby, but the' hain't sca'cely a sound that I kin detect. Sca'cely a sound. Take a rooster a-crowin', for instance. The only way I kin tell he's doin' it is to watch him throw back his head and open his mouth—and then half the time he fools me, 'cause he's only swallerin' somethin'. Yes, sir. And railroad whistles. Say, you could blow one of them things under my bed, and if

you didn't shine the headlight on me all to the same time, I'd sleep on as innocent as a babe. Why, once they was blastin' stumps yonder, and they put about a ton of dynamite under one of 'em, and me standin' so clost I could nigh reach out and tech it! Well, some fellers tried to holler to me, but 'twan't no use. I never heard a whisper. And then the blast she let loose. It so happened my back was turned, and, honest Injun! the first thing I ever knowed about that explosion was when half of the stump come tumblin' down out of the clouds on to my left foot and lamed me all up."

"I guess," says Catty, "you're the deafest man in this county."

"State," says Mr. Lovey, sort of severe, "and mebby in the hull dummed *U*-nited States."

"Well," says Catty, "that's something to be proud of, I tell you. But I'm kind of sorry you can't hear our band."

"Can't. Hain't no use tryin'," says Mr. Lovey, with a waggle of his head.

"May we look at that pavilion you spoke about?"

"Speak a mite louder."

Catty did. "To be sure ye kin. Jest help yourself. Thinkin' of havin' a picnic?"

"No," says Catty. "We're looking for a place to have band practice."

"There hain't a mosquiteer on the island," says Mr. Lovey.

That wasn't an answer, either.

"You see," says Catty, yelling so loud they must have heard him up at the state capital, "the village tyrants have up and passed a law that we can't have band practice inside the village limits, so we got to find us a place just outside, because we got to practice."

"Ye mean them fellers has forbid ye to play on your horns in town?" says Mr. Lovey.

"Yes, sir."

"I never heard of sich a proceedin'," says he. "But I never set no store by them men, anyhow. Won't let ye play, eh? Wa-al now, I tell ye what ye can do. Jest fetch them horns and things right over here, and ye kin sort of sweep up and tinker up that there ol' pavilion of mine, and use it all ye want. All I ask is that ye refrain from killin' off my frawgs and from throwin' stones in the river to scare off my fish."

"Thank you," says Catty.

"And," says Mr. Lovey, "if anybody tries to come across that there bridge of mine to molest ye, I'll load up my ol' double-barrel shotgun with rock salt, and I'll season 'em so's they 'll be pickin' pieces out of their hide from now till kingdom come. I won't endure no triflin' with my rights, not from nobody. And if I want a band a-tootin' on my island, I'm a-goin' to have it. B'jing! I'll have six bands, if I want 'em. I'll show 'em all."

"Now," says Catty, "that's what I call mighty nice of you, and it's a shame you're so deaf you can't ever hear us play."

"Never hear a note of it. Not if you blowed all them horns within a inch of my ear. Why, boys, you hain't ever met as deef a man as I be!"

"And," says Catty, "I bet we never do."

That tickled Mr. Lovey to death. He put down his fish-pole so it couldn't be run off with if a fish got on the hook, and went over and showed us the old pavilion. There was a place at one end of it where there had been a refreshment stand, with kind of shelves and closets and things, and Catty said we could get padlocks and keep our instruments and music there. The place was kind of

run down and dilapidated, but a day's work with enough kids and hammers and brooms and rakes would put it into shape.

So we said good-by to Mr. Lovey and went to collect the band, which, we figured, would be hiding in cellars and behind barns and what not. It looked like it would be quite a job for us to smuggle all our instruments out of town, but the first thing to do was to notify everybody what we'd done, and then we could make a plan to dodge the vigilance of the tyrants.

CHAPTER IX

"WHAT next?" says I.

"Now," says Catty, "that we've circumvented the tyrants, we will have band practice."

"Is that all?"

"It's enough to start on," says he. "You have to work up to a revolution gradual like. You don't just step out and holler that there is one and then go at it. That would be silly. No, sir. What you have to do is plot and plan and lay your foundations, and then when all is ready spring your *coup d'état.*"

"Spring your what?"

"Coup d'état."

"Oh," says I. "One of them?"

He looked at me the way the arithmetic teacher does after I get through doing the mental example about the man rowing four miles an hour against a current running three miles an hour—you know the one—and says, "Say, you aren't starting in to be a revolutionist without knowing what a *coup d'état* is, are you?"

"I'd just as soon," says I. "If anybody was to put one in my hand I wouldn't know how to hit with it."

"Huh!" says he.

"Well," I says, "if it's necessary I'll learn. Go ahead. What is this coo detay you're talking about?"

"It's French," says he.

"So much the better," I says. "None of the Town Board talk French. We can go right up and say coo detay to their faces and they won't have an idea what we're talking about. That's what I call smart, Catty—going out and having a revolution in a foreign language. But exactly what do you do when you spring one of these French things?"

"It's the nub of the revolution," says he.

"I never had anything explained so clear," says I, "but I'm satisfied. I never did ache for learning. No. I can get along fine the way I am, and if you ever find out what one of those coo detays is, why, you can keep it to yourself. I'll fight my revolutions in English or in hog Latin."

"I know what one is," says he.

"Sure," I says, "but you feel it's best to

keep it a secret. When's band practice called?"

"To-night," says he, "and every fellow's got to fetch a lantern. And another thing we got to do is to post a guard at the end of the footbridge. This revolution has got to be organized secret, and we don't want any spies."

"It's about the most secret-sounding thing I ever heard of," says I. "There won't be anybody there keeping quiet but about thirty kids with brass horns and drums. I don't see as there is any way they could detect us, even if we didn't set a guard. Nope. Folks farther away than Sunfield won't hear a thing—unless the wind happens to be blowing that way."

"I'll have Hans Knudsen there," he says. "You notify as many as you can, and so'll I."

Well, there wasn't any use arguing with him, so I went along about my business, and when it got to be half past seven the kids began to show up on the island with their instruments and lanterns, and we all headed for the old pavilion and got fixed as comfortable as we could, and Hans passed out sheets of music that didn't mean any more to me than warts on a tree. He had a cor-

net himself and a little stick to wave in the air, and he made a speech, part in no language at all and part in Scandinavian, and this cleared things up a lot for us, so we knew exactly what was expected of us. Hans was a good talker. He could say a lot of words and say them loud, and faster than an express train. He was what you'd call fluent—but there was a little drawback. Just a kind of a small defect, as you might say. It didn't matter if Hans was talking to five thousand people, there was just one who understood what he was talking about —and that was Hans.

We got around in a circle and propped our music up in front of us, and Hans he came and showed everybody just how to make music on his horn in Scandinavian. Those must have been Scandinavian horns, because it seemed like they couldn't make music in American. I got hold of one note, and hung on to it for that evening. Yes, sir. I never let go a minute for fear I'd lose it and never get it back. I figured there were eight notes in the scale, and if I caught and held on to one every night for eight nights I'd know them all. That sounded simple. Learn a note a night, and be a mu-

sician! That was me. And at that I did better than some of them.

.Hans he ran around from one horn to another, plastering his ear to it and listening like he really hoped to hear what he hoped to hear, but, from the expression of his face, he didn't. He wore a kind of a disappointed look. In fact, he looked almost scared at times. After a half an hour of it he saw it wasn't going to work out that way, so he split us up and spread us all over the island as far apart as he could get us and told us to practice. I did. I grabbed on to my note and tooted it until I got it fixed in my mind so firm I couldn't forget it if I wanted to.

Once I stopped to listen. When we were all bunched together you couldn't hear much. You kind of lost sight of the racket in the bulk of it, but when we were all spread over the island and scattered like we were, it was different. You can bet it was. Instead of being just one big bunched racket, it was a couple of dozen private and separate noises that you could tell apart, and the best you could do was to try to make out which one you thought sounded the worst. All of them did. The clarinet was

the meanest-sounding, but the bass horn was kind of serious and bloodthirsty. Then there were all the in-between horns and the drums.

I was posted kind of near the little bridge, and after a while I noticed lanterns moving around on the shore. That meant folks were getting interested, and you couldn't blame them much. I'd have been interested, too. And then somebody came to the end of the bridge and hollered. Not many heard him on account of us and our horns, but I could tell he was hollering by the way he waved his lantern around and jumped up and down. So I let go my note for a while and went to our end of the bridge, and there was Catty.

"Hush!" says he in my ear.

"Afraid he'll know somebody's on the island?" says I in the loudest shout I ever shouted. Catty almost heard me.

"Hush!" he says again. "It's Town-marshal Hickey."

"What's he want?"

Catty kind of looked at me, and then he says: "Oh, he's come out to take vocal lessons, I guess. What d'ye think?"

"He's singing beautiful," says I, "and here he comes."

"Kind of figgered he would," says Catty.

"Think he knows anybody's on the island?" says I.

"He must have got a hint somehow," says Catty. "Maybe a traitor gave us away."

"There wasn't any other way he could find out," I says.

The town marshal came across the bridge cautious—that is, he came about four steps on to the bridge, and then he quit coming all of a sudden and kind of bounded back, and when he bounded he dropped his lantern and it went out.

"What happened then?" says I.

"He ran into the town line," says Catty.

"What town line?"

"The one our lawyer told us about. The one he hasn't any authority beyond."

"But," says I, "I thought a town line was just kind of imaginary, like the equator. Just a edge where the town quits being and something else starts."

"That's how town lines used to be," says Catty, "but I improved on the idea."

"Oh!" says I. "How'd you do it?"

"With a clothes line," says Catty. "I

never could see any use in imaginary lines, because there are so many folks without any imagination. Town-marshal Hickey is one of them, and so are the men on the Town Board. No. You have to have something real for that kind of people, so I rigged up a real piece of geography. Can't anybody make a mistake now where the town boundary ends."

"Now," says I, "you can call it a real boundary because folks run into it and bound back."

"This isn't any time for jokes," says Catty, "especially that kind of jokes. I've heard of boys being tarred and feathered for being funny like that."

"Folks that can think them up," says I, "most generally tells them."

"I hope the marshal didn't skin anything," says Catty.

"Anyhow," I says, "he'll come more cautious next time."

That was what he did. He kind of felt his way up to the town line in the dark and grabbed it and hung on and hollered. Catty walked out on the bridge, and I went with him.

"Anybody there?" Catty yelled.

"Ye kin bet the's somebuddy here," says Marshal Hickey, "and it's a officer of the law a-persecutin' his duty under the statute in sich case made and pervided. . . . Wait till I ketch the one that strung up this here rope for me to bust my neck over."

"That," said Catty, "isn't a rope."

" 'Tis, too, a rope. I kin feel it."

"It's not a rope, Marshal. It's a hunk of geography. Ever hear of a town line?"

"Calc'late to."

"Well, that's it. You ran into the town line."

"Say, ye young——"

"Now, Marshal," says Catty, "don't go and get yourself mixed up with international law. Marshals don't have anything to do with the law of nations. You got a right to marshal all you want to inside that town line, but when you step outside of it, why, you can't marshal worth a cent. Get the idea? . . . What was it you wanted?"

"The Town Board they up and passed a ordinance forbiddin' them noises, and I come to see it's enforced."

"Oh," says Catty, "that's it, eh? But, say, Marshal, did the board say there couldn't be any noises all over the state?"

"No."

"Where did they say there couldn't be any?"

"In town."

"To be sure," says Catty. "And that settles that."

"Wait," says the marshal, "till I git out my jackknife, and I'm a-comin' over there to enforce law and order."

"Better go easy," says Catty. "Cutting a town line is some kind of a crime. I'll bet you. Where you stand is town. Where we stand isn't town. Ask anybody. This island isn't in town, and so the Town Board can't make any laws about it. And you, being a town marshal, can't come over here and marshal around. Get the idea?"

"You're raisin' a plea of jurisdiction, be ye?" roared the marshal. "I'll jurisdiction ye. D'ye think a passel of kids kin caterwauler like you be and make us folks endure it jest because you stepped over the town boundary? Say, it can be heard in town as plain as a factory whistle."

"Too bad," says Catty. "You're entitled to stop the noise at the boundary if you want to. We shan't interfere with that. Go as far as you like. And besides, the band

practice way out here isn't disturbing anybody, anyhow. It's just a few folks who want to be mean. Now, Marshal, we are standing on out legal rights like our lawyer told us to, and if you take a step on to our property across that line, you got to take the consequences."

"Dast you resist a officer of the law?"

"The minute you step over that line you aren't an officer any more; you're nothing but a man and a trespasser, and we figger on treating you as such."

"You wouldn't dast," says the marshal.

"Try it once," says Catty in the voice he uses when he means business, "and see."

The marshal kind of hesitated, and then he said a number of things he had on his mind, and I didn't notice one of them that was complimentary; and he told us where we would end up, which was in jail, and what he aimed to do, and wound up with a general mess of information about boys and horns, and said he was going back to town to get instructions, and that he'd be back and we had better be gone when he got here.

"G'night, Marshal," says Catty.

CHAPTER X

"AND that," says I, "was that."

"That part of it," Catty says. "There 'll be more. But," he says, "the Town Board and the marshal can't do a thing unless they can get our parents to back them up."

"Eh?"

"Why, if our folks forbid us to go on, we'd have to quit."

"Sure! But they won't. I know my dad won't."

"That's what we got to make certain of. You see, we really aren't a nuisance, and it won't be long before the band is making honest-to-goodness music. The worst," says he, "will soon be over."

"But," says I, "while the worst lasts it's pretty bad. Listen."

We both listened, and Catty chuckled. "We can't win any prize with that," he says. "But give us a month's steady practice and you'll hear something." Then after a minute he says, "What we got to do is to get in a lot of quick work on the parents."

"How?"

"Get them to back us. Kind of make it a row between the parents and the Town Board. Then we'll see. If we can just keep going until we get where we can play tunes, all the trouble will stop and folks will be proud of us and anxious to have us play. You see."

"Better call a meeting after this practice is over and get all the kids to argue with their folks."

"You bet," he says, "and to-morrow we must get everybody over here to fix up the pavilion and lockers to store our instruments and music. With locks on them."

"Maybe the marshal would come over and swipe 'em," I says.

"And maybe not," says Catty. "I'll bet nobody steps on this island."

So he called a meeting in a half hour and every member of the band promised to have a talk with his folks before he went to bed; and everybody agreed to show up to-morrow and work, which they did. We came with saws and hammers and what loose lumber we could borrow one place and another; and what was even better, almost every kid reported that his folks didn't see any reason

why they shouldn't go on with the band, so long as they didn't do it in the house where they set their fathers and mothers crazy. I've noticed that about parents. The things they object to most in their kids are things that annoy them. Yes, sir, a kid can do almost anything within reason so long as he does it where he can't be seen or heard; but just let him start to have a good time when his dad wants to read the paper or take a nap, or when his mother wants to play on the piano or darn socks, and he's up against trouble. People don't like to be worried, and more kids have been spanked on account of that than anything else.

But, anyhow, by night we had the old lockers fixed up, and benches built, and the roof mended, and everything cleaned up so that we had a regular band meeting place. Catty managed to buy three or four of those gas lamps like medicine shows use, and they lighted up the old pavilion so you could *see* to read music in it anywheres—whether you *could* read music or not. The kids were pretty enthusiastic, too, though a lot of them had sore lips from tooting so hard, and nearly every one agreed to come for another practice that night. There seems to

be something about being in a band that gets fellows all heated up inside—and then we all wanted to get so we could make a parade and wear our new uniforms.

Before we left Catty painted a big sign and stuck it up on the middle of Mr. Lovey's bridge, and the sign said:

TOWN LINE
Private Property
KEEP OFF

Look out for Savage dog
Beware dangerous Bull
Poison Ivy
Rattle Snakes

Now that was some sign. About all he could have added to it to make it scare anybody would have been to paint it yellow and stick "Small Pox" on it.

Folks in town had heard about the town line and the marshal, and almost everybody was laughing about it, which was a good thing for us. Marshal Hickey didn't like it much, but I guess he and the Town Board must have decided they were licked, because they didn't disturb us any more and we went right along learning as hard as we

could. It would surprise you to see how quickly we caught on. In two weeks we could almost play a tune so it sounded like what the tune was. I admit there were spots! Oh yes, every little while some instrument would go off by itself and have a little excursion in places where music never goes, but that was to be expected. In three weeks we could manage that tune so that almost all the arguments, whether it was the "Assembly March" or "America," had died down, and folks admitted it was one or the other. It never did get quite unanimous, as you might say, but people agreed to let it lay.

Another month of steady practice, with Catty keeping at everybody day and night and driving us until we got almost to hate the sight of him, and we were able to read music about as good as most folks, and play quite a lot of it. Of course the bass drum got perfect first, and the snare drummer he did pretty good. Why, say, he could make that thing sound like hail falling on a tin roof. Then the altos came along, because about all they ever had to do was pick out a couple of notes and lean on them all the way through a piece. Like this: Pah-pah-

pah-pah-pah-pah; tuh-tuh-tuh-tuh-tuh. Then they'd go back to pah-pah and up to tuh-tuh and so on, and sometimes they would vary it by playing pah-tuh-pah-tuh, that way. It was easy compared with the cornets and saxophones and clarinets—the instruments you could really play a tune on. The bass horn was hard work, but all he had to do was have breath enough to go umph-ah-umph-ah all the evening.

It was about this time Catty began to plan on something. I could see it in his eyes, but he never said a word. Not Catty. He was the kind who never tell they're going to do a thing until after it's done, and sometimes not then—though he does like to have folks know what he has done and praise him for it. He loves to be praised, but then, so do I.

We had six tunes down pretty good so that the cornets didn't quarrel with the clarinets the way they used to. A quarrel between a cornet and a clarinet is a kind of a horrible thing and makes you wish you had been born with plaster-Paris ears. And then, on a Saturday night when we had been called early to practice, there was Catty ahead of us.

"We're going to have a regular practice to-night," he says, "with our uniforms on and everything."

The band was for this strong, because they had never been allowed to wear the uniforms at all, and there was a scramble to get into them. You'd better believe we looked grand. Say, Barnum and Bailey never had a richer-looking band than we did! You know about the colors and the gold braid and everything. Well, it was still there, and you wouldn't have known us, honest Injun! We looked as if John Philip Sousa was just going to step out and direct us. That's how good we were.

We played a couple of tunes, and I guess it must have been the uniforms, but we sure did them better than we had ever done before. Catty looked tickled.

"Now," he says, "we'll march. We got to get used to playing while we march. There's four tunes we know without music. We'll play them."

"Where we going to march?" I asked.

"Just around, kind of," he says.

But he marched us across the bridge and across the town line right over to where the marshal could arrest us or anything, but we

were so kind of interested and excited we didn't care. We wanted to play, but he wouldn't let us yet. We had to drill, and it was lucky we had learned band drill pretty well, for he put us through all the motions with the drum major whirling his stick.

"Now," he says, "everybody be quiet until I give the word. Not a whisper."

So we mogged along until we came right to the edge of town, and I wondered if Catty was going to have the nerve to take us in. He had. Lack of nerve was something that never troubled him. We marched by back streets and once we went down an alley, and then out we came, before we knew it, right on the public square in the middle of town. Just before we got to it Catty halted us and formed us in sets of eight, and then he told us what tune to play, and waited a while, and then gave the word to strike up. We struck. Whee! Maybe we didn't lather into those horns, and then out we marched right into the middle of the square and halted and played that tune through from beginning to end. You should have seen the folks. Everybody r'ared back on their hind legs and stared, and hardly anybody knew

us at all. The town was so surprised it almost bust, and folks came running from all directions.

Then we formed in a square and played another tune, and after it folks clapped their hands, and we played another, and they clapped louder, and we played the fourth one we knew by heart, and a lot of folks hollered and cheered. Say, it was fine! You could hear them talking about it on all sides of us, and recognizing us, and my dad was there and he saw me and pointed me out to a man he was with, and other parents saw *their* kids and pointed *them* out and 'most swelled up and busted with pride. Honest! That was the change. You never saw the beat of it.

Then along came Marshal Hickey and made like he was going for us, but the crowd wouldn't have it and hollered for us to play some more, so Catty passed music around and we played two more tunes, and that was about all we could play and not trip over our tongues. Then, without saying a word, we got formed in squads again and Catty marched us away, and everybody in the crowd opened up his mouth and cheered. It was grand. Honest, it was *noble*. It made

your heart beat like it was going to rip loose. What it was was a regular triumph!

Catty wouldn't let us stop for anything, nor speak to anybody out of the ranks, but held his discipline perfect and marched us back to the island, and there he ordered us to break ranks and get dressed, which we did in a hurry because we wanted to get back to town to hear folks talk about us. We knew they must be saying a lot of grand things, and we all wanted to get there and hear some of them before they cooled off and got used to it. And Catty wasn't the last one to get to town, either. He and I walked together, but he couldn't walk a bit faster than I did. Once or twice we ran—but then we didn't want to miss anything.

"Say," he says, "did you see him?"

"Who's him?"

"Torrey Withey," says he.

"No. Was he there?"

"Big as life and sore as a stone bruise."

"Gosh! I'm glad he saw it. Bet it made him mad."

"His dad was with him and I saw them talking about us."

"Bet what they said wasn't sugary."

"I wonder how his band's getting along?"

"It ought to be doing fine, with a paid teacher and nothing to do but play."

"We got to go out and kind of spy around."

"First chance we get."

"But we better not be caught. They'd throw us in the lake."

"Mebby."

And so we got to town and to the square, and, sure enough, Torrey Withey and his dad were there yet, and as we passed he says to Catty:

"So that's what you call a band?" he says, kind of sneering.

"Don't remember calling it anything."

"Get those uniforms out of the rag bag?"

"Were they kind of a disappointment to you?" Catty asked him, as sweet as molasses.

"I wouldn't let my band wear them to dig ditches in."

"Is that what your band is going to do?" Catty asked, like he was surprised. "I thought it was going to try to play music."

"I've a good notion to hand you one," says Withey.

Catty he stepped a little closer and kind of squinted his eyes, so I knew it would be

just as well for Withey if he walked kind of softly, and says, "Please do." Just like that. But Withey didn't, and Catty laughed a little like he does when he's mad, a kind of an aggravating laugh. "If," says he, "your band's as willing to play as you are to fight, it ought to be a dandy."

"If my father wasn't here——" says Withey.

"We can go where he isn't."

Withey didn't say anything to that and we walked on, but he called after us and says, "If you think that collection of scarecrows is going to get in the band tournament, you want to take another think."

Catty just laughed and went along, and pretty soon folks were patting him on the back and shaking hands with him and telling him that what the town had always needed was a band, and how glad they were it had one at last. And that's just like folks. They clean forgot how they tried to chase us out with brickbats the first night we tooted our horns.

CHAPTER XI

IT was about here the mystery started in to get us all messed up, and there's nothing so upsetting as a mystery. Folks like to hear about mysteries and read about mysteries, but when it comes to having a mystery shoved down the back of your neck, as you might say, why, it's a cat of another color. No, sir, if I've got to be the sufferer I'd pick out the mumps any day, if I had my choice, rather than a good hard case of the mysteries. This was a little mystery—that is, the thing that was mysterious was little, and it was scary and it come as close to making me climb a tree and stay there forever as anything that ever happened.

Now about mysteries, the kind of a mystery that is hardest to put up with is one that isn't quite natural—if you get what I mean. One that can't be accounted for as being done by *folks*. And somehow *smallness* in a mystery is about as bad as anything you can think up. Dad says normal is the word I'm looking for—and this mys-

tery of ours wasn't any more normal than it would be to go outdoors and see rain going up instead of falling down—and it happened right on Big Hole Island where our band things were kept and where we had band practice.

It all started the next morning when Catty and I went over to the island to kind of clean things up and see that everything was all right. The funny thing about it was that everything *was* all right. That is to say, everything looked all right, so we just stayed and fussed around, kind of seeing what we could do to improve our outfit and thinking maybe we'd fish a little or go over and talk to Melchisideck Lovey, because he's a lot of fun to talk to on account of his being so deaf and what he thinks he understood you to say.

The pavilion I've talked about was near the center of the island, with woods all around it, and it was pretty big, say fifty feet wide by seventy long, and it was open on three sides so there would be plenty of air when folks danced, which they used to do, and I guess they needed plenty of air, the way they danced then. The other side was boarded up, and that is where the old

refreshment counter was, and a couple of rooms behind it for storage and maybe where somebody slept once. One of these rooms had kind of lockers or cabinets in it.

There was a table in the other room, and Catty says to let's get it out in the locker room and it would be handy there to put things on, so we went in and looked at it. It was a small, square table and there was close to an inch of dust on top of it. Yes, sir, the whole top was just smooth and gray with dust and not a mark on it. You've seen them that way when a thing has been standing for years where nobody's been.

"Find a rag or something," says Catty, "and we'll clean her up a bit."

So we both went out to look for a rag, and I couldn't find one, but there was a big piece of paper that I thought would do as well, so I went back in and walked up to the table and reached for it to commence wiping off. But I didn't wipe—not a dab. No, siree. I just stared.

"Catty," says I.

"What?" says he.

"Come here," says I, "a-runnin'."

So in he came, and I pointed.

"Did you do that?" says I.

"No," says he, his eyes bugging out. "What's the idea? Playing a joke on me?"

"I ain't," says I. "When I just came in here *that* was there, right where you see it, and I hadn't touched the table. Anyhow," says I, "how do you think I could have done it, eh? Tell me that. And," says I, *"what* could have done it? Say! What?"

"Doggone if I know," says he, scratching his head and looking all over kind of uneasy. "It's funny, isn't it?"

"Funny," says I, "it's a heap worse than funny. But *something* did it. It wasn't there when we were in here a minute ago, was it?"

"No."

"And it's here now? No mistake? We really see it, don't we?"

"We sure do," says he.

"Then what's the answer?" says I.

"The answer," he says, kind of slow, "is that somebody or something has been in here in the second or so that we were outside. Something has been in this room and out again, and"—he stopped again and looked all around—"it didn't come in or out of the door, because I never was out from behind the counter and nothing could have got past me."

"There's no other way out of the room," says I.

"Window," says he.

I went to the window, and it was covered with dust, and so was the sill, and what gave me the shivers right then and there was this: the window was nailed down. "It didn't get out of the window," I says, and I didn't like the sound of my own voice. It wasn't the way I generally talk at all, but kind of quivery and husky. "Say," I says, "let's you and me git out of here."

"Scared?" says Catty.

"You bet," says I.

"That," says he, "makes two of us."

"Come on," says I.

"No," says he. "Let's figure it out."

"It's one of those things," says I, "that I'd rather figure out where there's more room and the sun is shining and there are folks around. Let's go and stand in the middle of the town square and figure it out there. That's a dandy place."

"I kind of feel that way myself," says he, "but this is the place to do it. But first, before we go any farther, this is a secret. Don't mention it to any of the kids or to anybody else. We got to use this place to prac-

tice, and we can't have the band getting nervous about it. Remember."

"I'll remember," says I. And then, "Say, Catty, you don't suppose this is some trick young Withey is playing on us to scare us out, do you?"

"I don't," says he, "but maybe it is. If it is he's got more brains than I think, because this is something that would scare 'most anybody—until you find out what it is and get it accounted for."

"What," says I, "if it's one of those things that can't ever be accounted for?"

"Ghost?"

"Something like that."

"Believe in ghosts, do you?"

"No," says I, "but on the other hand, I don't *not* believe in them. It's this way with me—there wouldn't be so much smoke without a little fire some place. People have been believing in ghosts for a million years, and something *started* them. Ghosts and fairies and all such-like animals. So if something started folks believing, why, somewhere and somehow there must have been something, eh?"

"Um . . . !" he says. And then, "But this is so little."

"That's what scared me first," says I.

"It might have been a baby," says he.

"How would a baby that size get here and how would it get out, and what would it be doing here, and last of all, how in the world could a baby *reach* that spot? That's what settles the baby question with me. Just notice the dust. Not disturbed except in that one spot. A baby would have to stand on the table to reach it. That's how it looks to me, or anyhow, on a chair. That mark's right in the middle of the table. No baby did it."

"Nothing but a baby could have done it."

"Something besides a baby *did* do it."

"Measure it with yours," says he, and I did. Though I didn't want to any at all. It——

But you don't know what it was, do you? I'll tell you. Right in the very middle of the table, pressed in the dust and printed there, was a hand, a whole hand, palm, four fingers, and thumb! But that wasn't the worst. I measured it, and from one end to the other it was less than four inches long. Now take a think about that! A hand so small you could slip it in your vest pocket like a watch. Why, anybody with a body

to match a hand like that couldn't be more than a couple of feet tall! What d'you think of that?

"Let's git," says I.

"I'm going to stay right here—anyhow, until something worse happens," says he, "and see what I can find out."

"All right," says I, "but if my knees knock together so they split the knee caps, and I go lame for life, it's your fault."

"I'm as scared as you are," says he, "and maybe more, because I've got more sense."

"Maybe you got more sense," says I, "but for once I'm doing something better than you are, and more of it. No, sir. This is one thing I can be proud of and tell folks about and brag over. It's *first class.* I doubt if anybody ever beat it. Just take a look at me. Right now I hold the world's championship medal for being scared. I'm the scaredest kid the world ever saw."

"How," says Catty, "did it get into this room—all in a second?"

"Search me."

"And how did it get out?"

"Same answer. Only guess I can make is that maybe it's one of those things that don't bother about walls and doors, but just

slide through things. Maybe there's a kind of critter that can swim through a door like a fish swims through water."

"Um . . . ! Wish I knew what kind of bait to use for it," says Catty.

"Listen," says I, "if you want that kind of a mess of fish you can have it. Me, I fish for something I can eat."

Well, we went over that room from top to bottom and up the sides. There wasn't even a rat hole. There was just one way to get out that anything human could use, and that was the door. We knew nothing went out of the door, so there we were. It was a *thing*.

We didn't touch the table, but left it just the way it was. We *could* have touched it if we had wanted to, but we didn't want to. It was right there, and anybody could have wiped it off. It would have been just as easy as rolling off a log—but, as I say, we didn't want to, and we got out of there and sat where the sun was shining bright and talked it over. Pretty soon we almost got to believing we had fooled ourselves and never seen anything at all.

"Maybe," says Catty, "you hypnotized me."

"Then who," says I, "hypnotized me?"

"We might have done it to each other," says he.

"I wish I thought so," I says, "then we could hire the town hall and give a show and make lots of money. But to hypnotize a fellow you have to make passes in front of his eyes and tell him to believe he's lost his pants in a ballroom. That's the way I've seen 'em do, and we didn't do that."

"All the same," says he, "I don't believe we saw anything at all."

"Maybe not," I says. "Anyhow, I hope we didn't."

"Let's go back to make sure."

"Some day," says I, "but not just now."

"That's how I feel," he says, "but we'll wait a few minutes and see if it doesn't wear off."

So we waited, and argued with ourselves, and tried to make us believe we didn't see anything but just thought we did, and at last we kind of dared each other to go in, and then there wasn't anything to do but go. But when we got to the door we kind of slacked up, and then we came to a stop and got polite. Each of us was perfectly willing the other should go in first. It was an

honor to go in first, when you were afraid to go, but Catty was willing the honor should be mine and I was willing the honor should be his—and there we were. So, in the end, we kind of crowded through side by side and edged up to the table like it was maybe going to reach out and bite us in the calf of the leg, and looked. Then we looked again and bent over and looked some more, and then we turned and looked at each other, and if I was as pale and staring as Catty Atkins was, then I must have been a sight. Anybody could have used me in an elocution book to illustrate how a person speaking a piece must rig up his face to show the audience he was scared to death.

"Awk!" says Catty, kind of faint-like, and I heard myself make a kind of a noise.

Then the table wasn't there any more and the room wasn't there, either, and we were out in the woods, moving away from there. Just how it happened I don't know, but it happened quick. Maybe the room jumped away and left us, but rooms don't usually do that sort of thing. I guess we must have jumped away from it. Then we felt a little foolish, but the foolish feeling didn't come

until the pavilion was a hundred yards off, and we stopped.

"Say," says Catty, "what did you see?"

"You tell me," says I.

"Was it there?"

"Unless I'm seeing double," says I.

And it was, for what we saw on the top of that dusty table wasn't the mark of one tiny hand, but the mark of *two*. Yes, sir. While we had been outside the thing had sneaked in and put its other hand down there. Two little hands less than four inches long! Now if that wasn't something to make your heart turn a flip-flop I don't want a copper cent.

CHAPTER XII

WE walked away from there kind of thoughtful, and I didn't feel just right in my mind until we were across the bridge and off of the island. The thing wasn't natural, and when things aren't natural, why, I'd just as soon they didn't happen to me. No, sir. Spooks and such-like animals can keep off my plate and take all their baggage right over into the next state if they want to. Catty didn't look like he was tickled to death, either.

"What," says I, "do you guess it is?"

"I don't guess," says he.

"'Tain't human," says I.

"It's got to be," says he.

"Why?" says I.

"Because," he says, "if it isn't then we're in a dickens of a mess. Haven't we troubles enough without having to get into a squabble with a ghost?"

"And an undersized ghost at that," I says. "Ordinary ghosts are bad, from all accounts, but a ghost that's so small it would

scare regular-sized spooks into fits is a pretty rickety proposition."

"It isn't a ghost," says he.

"How do you know?" says I.

"Because there's no such thing."

"Prove it," I says.

"I don't have to prove it," he says. "It's so."

"Folks have seen ghosts," says I.

"Fiddlesticks!" says he.

"With fiery eyes and clanking chains," says I.

"I tell you," he says, "there's no such thing. And if there was, what would one be hanging around Big Hole Island for? Ghosts are supposed to lay around places where they've been murdered or something, and nothing ever happened to anybody over there."

"Maybe he's just taking a vacation," says I.

"Ghosts don't take vacations," he says.

"First," says I, "you say there aren't any ghosts, and then you up and tell me they don't take vacations. What I'd like to know is how something there aren't any of cannot take a vacation. Just tell me that."

"What I mean," he says, "is, if there were ghosts they wouldn't take vacations."

"Why?"

"Well, they enjoy themselves all the time. They don't do anything but play tricks on folks. Scare 'em to death. What does anybody with as much fun on his hands as that *want* of a vacation?"

"If it was your business to scare folks," says I, "maybe you'd get tired of it and want to go off fishing or something for a change."

"Ghosts wouldn't. They're not made that way. And, besides," he says, "from all I've read, they're not supposed to go traipsing all over. No, sir, they're tied down to one house. When a ghost is set to haunt a house he has to stay right there on the job."

"Maybe," I says, "this one is a ghost out of a job. Just hanging around for a position."

"And I suppose he'll have a letter of recommendation in his pocket from his last boss," says Catty, kind of sarcastic.

"You never can tell," says I. "I dunno how they run their affairs."

"And nobody else does, either," he says.

"You seem to know a lot about 'em."

"I know enough to know what you say is silly."

"Maybe," says I, "but so are handprints on a table when there's nobody to make 'em. I never heard of anything sillier. But they were there, weren't they? You saw 'em."

"Maybe," he says, "it was a cat."

"Sure," I told him, "almost all cats have hands."

"We just got kind of scared," he said, "and thought it looked like a hand."

"All right," says I. "Let's go back, then, and make sure. If it was a cat we'll find a cat track, and if we find a hand—well, we find a hand."

I stopped like I was all ready to go back, which I wasn't, and I didn't think he was, either. It was taking a chance, because sometimes he does the foolishest things. But I made up my mind if he did go I'd mog along with him, spook or no spook. Anyhow, I told myself, a ghost with hands as small as that couldn't do much damage. But Catty hadn't any more notion of going back than I had.

"No," says he, "we got other things to 'tend to besides cat tracks."

"I bet we have," says I, and then I saw he had made up his mind to believe it was a cat when he knew very well it wasn't a cat at all, and would act accordingly. That's the kind of a kid he was. He could know a thing was so, and then go right along and pretend it wasn't and get satisfaction out of it. I wasn't that way. When I saw a dog I knew it was a dog, and no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't fix myself up to think it was a hippopotamus. Catty could. Why, I've hunted ostriches and camels and what not with him, and him all excited about it, when all I could see was chickens and an old milch cow.

"Well," says I, "now we've decided the ghost is a cat, what do we do about it?"

"Why," says he, "I thought we'd borrow a couple of steel traps, and while I'm busy this afternoon, you can trot over and set them in the pavilion."

"Who can set them?" says I.

"You can," says he.

"You mentioned the wrong name," I says. "I don't want any cats. I think it's cruel to set traps for cats. What would I do with

a cat if I caught her? Nope. If anybody goes trapping pussies, why, you're the trapper, and that's that."

"Scared?" he says.

"No," I says. "Just busy, like you."

"One thing we got to do," he says, "and that is keep our mouths shut. There's kids in the band, maybe, who believe in ghosts and such nonsense, and if they thought there was anything poking around that acted like a ghost, they'd go and hide under the bed. What they don't know won't hurt them."

"When's next band practice?"

"To-night," he says.

"I'm sorry," I says, "but I won't be able to be there. I got to stay home and work out a puzzle."

"You'll be there," he says, "and I'll be there, and everybody else will be there."

"Including the ghost—cat, I mean."

"Here comes Mr. Lovey," says Catty.

"Good," says I. "We'll ask if he's given a ghost permission to stay on his island."

Well, along came Mr. Lovey, and when he saw us he stopped and grinned friendly, and I went up to him and yelled as loud as I could, for he was most awful deaf, "Say,

Mr. Lovey, have you got a spook on your island?"

"Hey?"

"Have you got a ghost over there?"

"You'll have to speak a mite louder," he says. "I'm gittin' a trifle hard of hearin'. Try this here ear. Seems like it takes in more 'n the other one does."

I dragged in a deep breath and then hollered so hard I thought I'd split my lungs wide open.

"Ghost!" says I. "Spook! Have you got one on the island?"

"Lost a spoke?" says he. "What kind of a spoke? Where'd you lose it, and what was you doin' with one, anyhow?"

"Not a spoke," says I. "A spook. A spirit. A ghost."

"Oh," says he, "a goat! Well, don't fetch him on the island. They don't smell sociable."

I shook my head, kind of discouraged.

"That's a good boy," says he. "No, I don't hanker to have no goats around me. They come up behind and bang ye with their heads. Goats hain't got no manners. Used to keep one in the orchard, but after he'd h'isted me over the fence three times

I traded him for suthin'—I forgit what now —but I traded him off. Whatever it was I got for him was that much gain. No, I don't hold none with goats. They're what you might call a dead loss."

"Mr. Lovey doesn't care for goats, Wee-wee," says Catty.

"Oh!" says I. "Is that what he meant?"

"Try him," says Catty, "on some other animal."

"I don't believe he's an animal kind of a man," I says. "No, he'd run more to canary birds. How do you say ghost in deaf and dumb?"

"Write it," says Catty.

That was a bright idea, so I got out a pencil and wrote down on a piece of board, "Mr. Lovey, have you got a ghost on the island?"

He read it over three or four times, and then poked his finger at it and says, "What's that word?"

"Ghost!" says I.

"I told ye once," he says, kind of patient and long suffering, "that I don't cater none to goats."

Well, what was a body to do? I gave it up then and there and told him I was glad

he didn't care for goats, because I didn't care for goats, either, and in my opinion goats was about the lowest down of all the critters Noah took into the Ark and I never saw how he come to save 'em from the flood. If I'd been Noah I'd have left out lots of things he let in, such as skunks and mosquitoes and wood ticks and rattlesnakes. My judgment of Noah is that he was too doggone kind-hearted to animiles and not half thoughtful enough about the comfort of folks that had to live in the world after his old Ark got through sailing around with its menagerie.

"You might sing it to him," Catty says. "I've heard deaf folks could hear singing pretty good."

"No," says I, "and, besides, my voice is changing."

"That's right. The town has got used to the band, but if you start singing I'm afraid the trouble will stir up all over again." Then he turned to Mr. Lovey. and bowed polite, and says, "We're very much obliged, Mr. Lovey, for all the interesting natural history you have told us about supernatural beings, but I don't see how we can carry it home,

because it 'll spoil on such a hot day, and us with no ice."

To which Mr. Lovey grinned and says, "Sure, boys, you're welcome any time, and fetch along your friends," which is what I call one of the politest conversations I ever listened to. No arguing or bickering or anything, but just good manners from first to last and everybody happy and agreeable.

"If it's a cat," says I, "it's a cat, and I got a dog can chase it from breakfast to Galilee, but if it isn't a cat, then how do you get rid of it?"

"We might try moth balls."

"If Mr. Lovey doesn't like the odor of goats," I says, "he might object to moth balls. And I never heard of laying them around in a haunted house to any purpose. But there must be some way to clean a house of spooks, like you do of rats or fleas or anything. You've read a lot of books and I don't see why you haven't hit on something or other."

"Ghosts," says Catty, "are one of the hardest things to drive away that ever was —admitting there are any ghosts. Why, you get one in a bedroom and the doggone thing hangs around there for hundreds and

thousands of years, and everybody trying things to drive them away. No, I bet a man that could invent a disinfectant for haunted houses could make a pile of money."

"Let's look into it," says I. "Maybe it's the very thing we've been waiting for. I'd just as soon get rich fumigating out ghosts as any other way I know."

"Right now," he says, "I got all I can look after without bothering with ghosts or cats or alligators."

"Suits me," says I, "if it suits the ghosts." And that was what kind of worried me—what that thing with the small hands was going to do. If it didn't do anything, why, all right, but if it took it into its head to go doing spooky things when the band was practicing, that wouldn't be so good. About one haunting stunt and our band would be scattered all over from next door to week after next. But if Catty was contented with everything, why should I worry? I let him do most of my worrying for me, anyhow; he's used to it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE band got together early that night because Hans Knudsen had some new pieces he wanted us to learn—real tricky pieces they were, and we wanted to have some pretty difficult stuff all ready for the tournament. Ever since the band concert we gave in town the fellows had felt pretty confident of winning, and so they were ready to work harder and enjoyed it more. But Catty said if they got overconfident they would lay down on their practicing, and then the fat would be in the fire. He said the only way to make sure of winning was to work like the dickens, and, if we got good, to make up our minds to be better, and then to get better some more until there wasn't a chance of anybody else doing so well. If we did that, he said, we were sure to win. It looked to me as if he was right. Sure thing. If we played so well that nobody could play as good as we did, it looked like we would play better than anybody else, didn't it?

We kept on thinking we were pretty good, too, until something happened to kind of disturb us, but that comes a little later and mustn't get messed in here with this band practice we were having. We started out and played the "Assembly March" and the "Fire Drill Galop"—you know those pieces if you've ever heard a band play, and from where I sat it sounded as if Mr. John Philip Sousa never got quite so much noise out of the same number of instruments. We were great on noise. It was our strong point. If you make noise enough with a band, then it kind of drowns out your mistakes.

What I didn't tell you about was how we always had something to eat about halfway through practice. Blowing made us hungry, and every fellow brought a lunch, and we had a big coffee pot, and every time it was put up to a committee of four of the fellows—a different bunch each night—to swipe enough coffee from home so we could have something warm. We had a whopping big coffee pot, and anybody could get milk around our town—there were so many loose cows. Well, we played and played until about nine o'clock, and then Hans said we had done pretty rotten and he was

ashamed of us and we weren't fit to play in public before a convention of Berkshire pigs, which was the way he always talked, and then he says we better take a rest and eat a snack to see if it wouldn't do some good, because nothing else seemed to help.

We always put our lunches on a shelf under the counter where lemonade and things used to be sold, so we made a rush for there, and a couple of fellows started a fire and got water—and then there was the very dickens of a row. Everybody was hollering and quarreling in a minute, and blaming everybody else, and in about a minute there would have been a grand free-for-all scrap. But Catty jumped in and hollers to know what's the row.

"Somebody's been in the grub," says Wally Tucker.

"Opened up every package and swiped things out," says Balmy Snow.

"I had a hunk of apple pie I was saving up special," says Fatty Wiggins, "and it's gone, and if I ketch the feller that done it I'm goin' to set on him and rub it in his hair."

"Wait a minute," says Catty. "Let's all shut up and see what's what."

"We know what's what," says Wally, "and that is that some kid thinks he's smart, and he's goin' to get pitched in the river. Nobody kin monkey with my lunch and not suffer for it."

"Well," says Catty, "let's kind of use detective methods."

That interested them, because they kind of wondered what detective methods were and how anybody used them, so they hushed up, and Catty says:

"Every fellow whose lunch was opened and robbed hold it up."

Every single kid held up his lunch.

"It looks," says Catty, "like it was somebody not in the band, because it stands to reason no kid would rob his own lunch."

"That's right," says Fatty. "A feller 'd be a fool to do that."

"Besides," says Wally, "Hans Knudsen was standing right where he could watch that counter every minute, directing the band. Nobody could have got in and sneaked back there without his seeing them."

"Dot's right," says Hans. "Ay bane stand right here. Nobody come in, nobody walk past. Nobody nowhere."

"But somebody did get in," says Balmy Snow. "Look at them lunches."

"Somebody sneaked over from town."

"But how'd they get in?"

That started an argument that nobody could settle, and finally everybody decided to take lanterns and scour the island to see if they could find the miscreant. I had an idea they wouldn't, because, says I to myself, it was the thing with the little hands that did it, and if it can get into rooms when there aren't any doors or windows, and if it can walk right past a whole brass band of kids and steal their grub without anybody seeing, why, on a dark night it didn't seem to me like anybody would be very likely to discover him with barn lanterns.

Well, they didn't, but Balmy Snow found something, and the fat was in the fire. He was nosing around where the lunches had been, and all of a sudden he let out a holler.

"Hey!" says he, kind of scared. "What's this?"

"What's what?" says Catty.

"Come see," says Balmy, and we went. Balmy was holding his lantern under the shelf and there was a place where the dust

hadn't been cleaned out good, and right in the middle of that spot was the mark of a hand that wasn't four inches long—a palm and thumb and four fingers. "Now," says Balmy, "who done that?"

He held out his hand and compared it with the print in the dust, and it was about four times as big. "Say!" says he, kind of hushed like.

"It's a cat," says I, and glanced sideways at Catty.

"A cat," says Balmy, "can't untie strings. My lunch was tied up tight. Besides," he says, "that ain't no cat. Who ever saw a cat with fingers like that!"

"No," says Fatty, "that ain't a cat. We got cats, and I guess I know a cat track when I see it."

"Maybe it's a zebra," says I.

"How would a zebry git here?" Balmy says, "and, anyhow, they have hoofs like a horse."

"How d'you know?" says I. "Ever keep a zebra?"

"No," he says, "but it stands to reason."

"Well," I says, "if it ain't a cat and it ain't a zebra, I've run out of guesses. What do you think it is?"

"Shut up!" says Catty in a kind of a whisper.

"It might be a baby," says Fatty.

"A baby with a hand that size couldn't walk. Besides, we'd 'a' heard it bellerin'. That's what babies do. They always holler. I guess I know about babies. We got one. That ain't no baby at all."

"Besides," Balmy reminded everybody, "nobody seen anything come in or go out. We'd 'a' seen a baby. Babies is awful noticeable."

Then it happened. I 'most jumped from under my hair and left it standing all alone. It was standing, anyhow, right on end. I bet you could have used every hair for a toothpick, it was so stiff. Say, folks, I like to have died right there and give up the spirit. The thing went off right under my feet and everybody else's feet, and it was a laugh. Now a laugh is a kind of a genial, pleasant sort of a sound mostly. You like to hear laughs, and when you hear a good one you sort of start in to laugh, yourself. But I don't believe there's anything in the world so scary as a laugh that doesn't come where it belongs, or comes out of something that hasn't any business to be laughing, or

that don't sound just as if it was right in its mind. Scared! Oh, ladies and gentlemen, all you could hear for miles was teeth rattling together. Honest, that place sounded like a hailstorm!

The laugh started right under me, and then it kind of moved on and oozed through the air like it was going up past my face, flying on wings you couldn't see, and it lit on a rafter up overhead and perched there and laughed some more in kind of a screeching, sharp, awful disagreeable tone. And you couldn't see what laughed. It gurgled in its throat and took a fresh start, and hopped along to the end of the pavilion and laughed some more. Just seemed to move wherever it wanted to without a thing to see. Now a crazy laugh is bad when you can see who is laughing it, but a laugh that goes wandering all over by itself with nobody to take care of it is pretty bad medicine. Nobody's got any business to turn a laugh loose that way. I never saw so many pale kids in a bunch before in my life, and then Balmy yells, "It's a ghost!" and that started the stampede. It looked like nobody was last out of there and nobody was first—we just went together.

Catty didn't hold back any more than the rest of us, and I don't blame him. The ghost of a person is something I wouldn't want to have come and sit in my lap, but the ghost of a laugh is about the frighteningest thing you can think up. Nothing but a laugh. Sounds ought to come from somewhere. They belong to people or things. That's the way they should be. A toot belongs to a locomotive, but if toots went around the country, going off whenever they wanted to all by themselves, it would be a pretty kettle of fish.

We wedged in the bridge and clawed each other and kicked and bulged around until somebody broke through, and then it was like ice going out in the spring. Old Hans Knudsen was hollering in Norwegian, and that wasn't so nice, either. A grown man hasn't any business being afraid of anything. I wouldn't if I was a man, but I wasn't a man yet, so I had a right to be as scared as anybody.

We didn't stop until we were under an electric light, and there we clustered like so many June bugs. Light was what we wanted, and just then I wouldn't have stepped a foot into the dark if somebody

would have given me a new pair of patent-leather pants for it. No, sir, it couldn't be too light for me. And then Catty got back his voice and says, "Say, what ails everybody?"

"What ails you?" says Balmy. "I didn't notice you staying back there."

"I just came along with the crowd," says Catty, kind of sheepish. "But we got to go back. We can't leave all the lanterns lit, and all the band instruments laying all over the place. Come on."

"Where?" says Fatty.

"Back to the island, of course," says Catty.

"Where that thing is?"

"Why not?" says Catty.

"Why, is what I want to know," says Balmy. "I been there enough for to-night—and for to-morrow night, too, if you want to know what I think."

"But the horns will get all rusted up in the night air."

"They can rust in the morning air, too, if they want to."

"You're scared," says Catty.

"You bet your bottom dollar I'm scared, and I'll tell you something else about it, I'm

going to keep right on being scared till I'm sixty-five years old."

"Just because somebody laughed," says Catty, as sarcastic as he could.

"Somebody!" says Fatty. "What d'you call somebody?"

"Yes, Catty Atkins, and if you think any of us are goin' back where there's ghosts a-flyin' and a-laughin' from cellar to roof, you want to take holt of your galluses and think all over again."

"Anyhow," says Catty, "let's go back and get the horns. Then we can dash back here if you're afraid to stay."

"As far as I'm concerned," says Fatty, "those horns can stay there till they sprout. I'm done with horns. This band can go hang. I'm done."

"Huh!" says Catty. "How about you, Balmy?"

"I'm goin' home and pull up the covers," says Balmy.

Well, that was how they all felt, and it did look as if the ship was wrecked. If they wouldn't go back to get the instruments we wouldn't have any to play on, and if they wouldn't go back there to practice, it

was all off, anyhow. It looked like something had to be done.

"Wee-wee," says Catty to me, "have you got any backbone?"

"I got one," says I, "but it feels all-fired limp."

"I'm going back," says Catty.

"You've gone crazy," says I.

"I'm going back," he says. "I'm going now."

"By-by," says I. "I'll tell your folks where you were last seen."

"Quitter," says he, and off he started in the dark. I looked after him a couple of minutes, and didn't feel so good. There was something about it I didn't like worth a cent. Then I looked at the dark and I didn't like that, either, and I thought about the handprint and the laugh, and if there was anything about them to make a fellow feel charitable and forgiving and happy, why, I, for one, couldn't see it. But I wasn't as comfortable as I would have liked to be, and all of a sudden, without intending to do it at all, or without giving any orders to my legs, I was running after Catty as hard as I could.

"Hey!" I hollered. "Hold up a second. I'm coming."

Catty waited until I caught up, and then he says something I kind of remember to this day.

"Wee-wee," says he, "I knew you couldn't stay back."

"Huh!" says I. "I didn't fetch myself. It was my legs. They came without permission."

"Good old legs!" says Catty.

And then we started off through the dark, and I was never so lonesome in all my born days.

CHAPTER XIV

WE walked pretty fast till we got to the bridge, and then, somehow, we slacked down considerable. It didn't look like there was such an awful hurry. The island had been there a good many years, and it would probably stay for another ten or fifteen minutes. In fact, the closer I got to the bridge the more I was sure the place would stay till morning, anyhow. But Catty kept on going, not very fast, maybe, but still you could see he was making headway. Pretty soon we got to the end of the bridge and then I stepped back to let him go first. That was the polite thing to do because he was older than I was, and I believe in being polite whatever happens. Manners are my strong point, especially at night. I've never yet seen a time when I'd rush ahead to beat anybody into a dark cellar. No, sir, I stand back and take my turn, and don't crowd, neither.

Catty didn't stop, not even for a second. He told me afterward he knew if he stopped

he never would be able to get going again. And it was then I heard a funny noise, not much of a racket, but noticeable.

"What's that?" says I.

"My teeth," he says, short like.

"You can't hear mine," says I, "because I shoved my tongue between 'em, but it's getting all bit up."

"Take it out, then," says he, "and let 'em clatter."

"It might warn the ghost," says I.

"If you can't scare him off with a brass band," says Catty, "I don't believe a couple of sets of teeth are going to make much difference."

Then we went on as much as a dozen feet without saying anything, but I kept close to him and he kept close to me.

"We got to use strategy," Catty whispered.

"How?" says I.

"Work a night surprise on him."

"Fine," says I. "But nights are his business. Maybe he'll be laying for us and work one on us."

"He won't be expecting us back," says Catty.

"Seems as though he was justified," says I, "seeing the way we went off."

"Then," he says, "if we kind of debouch and crawl up stealthy and lay in wait, we may catch him at it."

"That's the trouble," says I. "I'm for going along noisy, and locking up the horns and stuff, and going away again noisy. I don't want to take anything by surprise."

"We got to," says Catty.

"Why?" says I.

"Because," he says, "we got to catch it and chase it off—or something."

"The something," says I, "is what's worrying me."

"We got to do it," he says.

"And what does that word debouch mean?"

"It's a military term," he says, "and soldiers do it."

"At night?" says I.

"Night or day," he says.

"All right," says I, "you debouch, and if you make a go of it, I'll debouch a little right behind you."

With that he debouched down on to his hands and knees, and so did I, and we kept on debouching at the rate of about two yards

a minute. The last breath I took was quite a ways back, and I didn't feel the need of any more for quite a while. I never knew a fellow's heart was so big and noisy. Mine sounded like a trotting horse crossing a plank bridge with most of the planks loose.

"It would be better," says Catty, "if we separated and come at him from two sides."

"Which side do you think he'll be on?" says I.

"Why?"

"Because I pick the other side," I says.

"Well, anyhow," he says, "in one way maybe it would be better if we stuck together."

"It's great," I told him, "how we agree."

Well, we debouched along another ten or twelve feet, and then I says, "What 'll we put him in when we catch him?"

"I don't know. Why?"

"It stands to reason we'll have to put him in something. A tin can, maybe, with a cover. Ghosts are made of air, kind of, aren't they? Well, you can't drag off a mess of air in your hands. You have to have a dish."

"It isn't a ghost," says Catty.

"No," says I. "It's a cat. When we get

him, you hold a can and I'll fan him into it with my hat. How 'll that do?"

"This isn't any time to be funny," says he.

"If you think I feel funny," says I, "just notice the cold sweat running off of me. I feel just as funny as a kid with a boil on his lip at a party where they're playing post office."

So we hustled as fast as we could another fifteen feet, and got there maybe ten minutes later, and then we came up for air again.

"Whatever it is," says Catty, "it isn't very big."

"No," says I, "but neither is a rattlesnake."

"It won't be suspecting we're coming, and, most likely, it will be out around doing whatever it does when nobody's looking."

"I hope he enjoys it," says I.

"And," says he, "we can get a look at it. Then if it don't look safe to monkey with, we can just slip away and not let on we're there."

"My idea exactly."

"But if it looks like we can tackle it, why,

I'll pinch you and at that we both jump on it."

"You pinch and I jump?" I wanted to know.

"I pinch and we *both* jump," he says.

"What I'm sorry about," says I, "is that I didn't eat that second piece of pie for supper to-night. Now I may never get around to it."

"Hush!" he says. "We're getting close. From now on we've got to be pretty cautious."

Well, sir, if anybody could be any more cautious than we had been up to then he would have been a ring-tailed wizard and ought to get the championship belt, but we tried it, and I guess we succeeded. Where I was it was so still the star that was the only one we could see sounded noisy. Once a bird that was half asleep let out one of those drowsy *chirps* and I almost swallowed my tongue. In another while we got to where we could see the black mass of the old pavilion ahead of us, and then we stopped again to kind of think it over. I wanted to think it over a long while, and wondered what time it was and how many hours be-

fore daylight. I could have stood it to stop right there and think until then.

But Catty touched my shoulder and commenced going ahead again, and after what seemed like about a week we were so close to the pavilion we could have thrown our caps into it. There we bogged down for good to watch and see what it was we were running our necks into. We laid as quiet as a couple of what-d'ye-callums and kept at it for three weeks, anyhow, and nothing happened. Then we kept at it for another six days, and then we heard a squeak. Up to then I'd been scared, but when I heard that squeak I wasn't scared any more. No, I wasn't. Nobody has ever invented a word for what I was. If you took all the scare out of the biggest army that ever got together and crowded it into one fellow, that was about a tenth of what I was feeling. Then Catty grabbed my knee.

"Something's moving," says he. He whispered it so I could hardly hear. But I knew something was moving as well as he did.

Then a chair moved and then there was a kind of a tittering laugh. I don't know what the most crowded spot in the world is, but there is where I wanted to be. Then

the thing found the snare drum and began to monkey with it, and it hit the bass drum an awful whack. After that it kind of fiddled around with horns and things until it came to the piccolo. It liked piccolos. Yes, sir, it was fond of that instrument, for you could hear it kind of giggle and then blow a lot of foolish squeaky notes, and then giggle some more and then blow some more. And all this time we couldn't see a thing—not a thing. It was dark as the inside of a black man's overcoat pocket. I was squinting and straining my eyes, but not a thing could I see. It didn't seem right. I had an idea a ghost ought to be kind of luminous, like phosphorus, or something, but this one wasn't. If he'd been any kind of a spook he'd have hung on a tail light, anyhow.

"I wish I could get a squint at it," Catty whispers.

"Maybe," says I, "it's better not."

"If he comes this way," says Catty, "I got a club, and I'm going to wallop him one, anyhow."

About then he got tired of the piccolo and began doing a kind of a dance around the floor, and Catty says, "Let's crawl a little

closer so's we can grab at him if he comes near the edge."

We crawled, and got our chins right up to the edge of the planks, and still we couldn't see anything; but just then the edge of the moon sneaked out past a cloud and things got sort of dim—not light so you could see much, but just not quite so dark as it had been before. Still we couldn't see anything, but after a few minutes our eyes got kind of accustomed to the new kind of darkness so we were sure we could see something moving, but it didn't look like anything but just a shapeless blot. It was a crazy-acting blot, and every minute or so it would chuckle to itself and giggle.

"Well," says I in Catty's ear, "the darn thing sounds good-natured."

"Hush!" says he.

Then the moon edged out a little more, and we could see a mite better, but not well enough to make out what it was we were looking at, except that it was awful small. It was too big for a monkey and nowhere near big enough even for a boy. The very smallness of it made it more kind of awful, like anything is that isn't natural, and land knows it wasn't natural for anything

s small as that to be giggling and playing n drums and piccolos.

Then the moon sneaked way out and it vas almost light enough to see under the oof, and I grabbed at Catty and says, "Say, o you see what I think I see?"

"It—it looks like it had on a plug hat," ays he.

"That's how it looks to me," I says, "and vho ever heard of a ghost in a plug hat?"

"It isn't a ghost," says Catty.

"No," I says like I did before, "it's noth-ng but a tomcat."

"Hush up!" he says. "It's coming this vay."

It started to, but changed its mind and apered off in the other direction, and then t went sideways with things flapping be-ind it like coat tails. "It's got on a Prince Albert," says I.

"Looks so," says Catty.

"'Tain't more than three foot high," I ays, "and who ever heard of any critter that ize wearing a plug hat and a Prince Albert oat?"

"Nobody," says Catty. "Shut up."

"Here it comes," says I, and this time t did come dancing right over toward us

and kind of humming a tune in a voice like a girl's, and waving what I took to be arms in the air. It got within half a dozen feet, and then Catty pinched me and I remembered what he said about *that*, so I made a dive for the thing, and Catty he made a dive. I didn't want to. I hadn't any hankering to touch the thing with my fingers, because I knew it was going to feel awful and clammy—if you could feel it at all. But when he pinched I had to dive because that's what I agreed to do.

Well, one of my hands grabbed Catty's hair, but the other grabbed cloth, and one of Catty's hands grabbed me by the Adam's apple, then caught hold of a foot, and there we were, the three of us, Catty and I and the ghost, all wallowing around in a heap on the floor and it a-squawking like a chicken when you're carrying it to the block to have its head cut off.

"I got him," says Catty.

"You got some of him," says I. "I got the rest."

"Sit on him," says Catty.

"He's an awful squirming ghost," I says, panting, because I couldn't quite make out whether I was wrassling with Catty or the

hing, and couldn't sort them out and take hances.

Then I got my knee on the thing's stomch, if that's what it had where my knee vent, and it let out another screech fit to vake the dead and quit squirming.

"We got it," says I.

CHAPTER XV

"STRIKE a match," Catty says, "and we'll see what we got."

"Can you hold it?" says I.

"Yes," says he; so I let loose with one hand and fumbled around in my pockets for a match. When I scratched it on the floor and took a look I almost keeled over in a cat fit. The first thing I saw was a hand, and, honest Injun! I could have bit it off in one bite and swallowed it without water, it was that small. Gradually I got my eyes away from that and found a face, and this was about of a size to match the hands, and it was the scaredest face I ever saw.

"Well!" says I to Catty.

Then he laughed out loud. "I told you it wasn't a ghost," he says. "We got something to start a circus with."

"No, you don't," says a squeaky little voice. "You don't start any circus with me. I got enough circus to last me till giraffes grow short necks. You can put me in jail or you can lynch me to a tree, but

you never get me on a platform again, selling photographs. I'm done."

"If we let you up will you promise to be good?" Catty asked.

"If you'll promise not to mention circus."

"It's a bargain," Catty says. "Get off him, Wee-wee."

We both got off, and I went sliding around until I found a lantern and lighted it. Then we took a good look. What we'd caught was a dwarf not more than three feet high. I guess before we tackled him he had been about the dressiest dwarf ever was, because he had on a Prince Albert coat and a white vest and white spats and patent-leather shoes, and a plug hat was rolling around on the floor.

"Now you got me," says he, "what do you aim to do?"

"Talk," says Catty.

"Go ahead," says the dwarf. "If there's anything I dote on it's talking. But, mind you, I'm going to escape. I'm born free and equal and I'm entitled to pursue life, liberty, and the rest of it, just like anybody twice as tall as I am. The Constitution don't say a word about dwarfs, now does it?"

"Not a word."

"Then that settles that."

"What's your name?" Catty asked.

"Admiral Bean," says he.

"Fine name," says Catty. "And how did you come here?"

"I escaped from them that was persecuting me and holding me a prisoner and otherwise treating me in violation of my constitutional rights as a citizen of the United States of America."

"Um . . . ! And how did they do that?"

"My guardian he up and rented me out to a circus. That's what he did, and me nineteen years old. I'm rented out for two years more—me, that's as good a citizen and as entitled to vote when I come of age as anybody! How'd you like to be stuck up on a platform for kids and women and everybody to stare at and poke with their fingers and ask how much you weighed and if you could eat and did they feed you bird seed and what size shoes you wore? You wouldn't like it. Nor you wouldn't like to sell photographs of yourself all the time for a quarter, or have a snake charmer in the next chair to you all draped with serpents, nor a wild man of Borneo on the other side,

that was as apt to reach over and bite your head off as he was to kill a fly. No, sir, that isn't any life for a free-born gentleman."

"I should say not," says Catty.

"And how'd you like to be carried around the whole circus tent by a giant about eleven feet tall, and an absent-minded giant at that. How was I to know when he'd mistake me for a cigar and stick me in his mouth and light me. Nice thing to have on my mind, wasn't it?"

"It wasn't," says Catty.

"And where'd I have been if an elephant broke loose? Just stand me up against an elephant. Just do it once. *Scrunch!* That would be the end of me. Pancake! Flatter than."

"It must have been awful," says Catty.

"And how'd you like to have to perform twice a day in a side show and throw your voice all over the tent? I want you to know that's mighty tiresome. Ever stand and throw heavy stones for an hour without letting up? Throwing anything just uses you up, and throwing your voice is as bad as anything else."

"You're a ventriloquist, too?"

"The best in the world," says Admiral Bean.

"That takes in a lot of territory," says Catty.

"You can add the sun and moon and stars if you want to. Because I'm it. When it comes to ventriloquism there isn't anybody else. No, sir. Just as I'm the smallest dwarf in the world, I'm the best voice-thrower."

"For anybody who hates it the way you seem to you're pretty proud of it," says Catty.

"I don't mind being those things, but I want to be them in a dignified, serious way. As for me, I would make a profession of being a dwarf and a ventriloquist—a high-class profession like preaching or being a lawyer. But they wanted me to be an ordinary clown. Not me. I got as much right to be President as anybody else."

"They'd have to cut down the presidential chair to fit you," says Catty.

"They could do worse," says the admiral.

"But," says Catty, "how came you on our island?"

"It looked like a good place to hide."

"Uh-huh. But why cut all those capers?

What for did you get into all our lunches and try to scare everybody to death?"

"You try to live on water and wild strawberries for a week or so, and you'd saw through a stone wall ten feet thick to get a dill pickle. I was hungry."

"Sure. But why didn't you come out and say so?"

"Because I was hiding, and when you're hiding you don't come out and ask for anything. You hide. I should think you would have sense enough to know that without being told."

"You sure busted up a band practice," says I.

Admiral Bean chuckled. "You folks did go helter-skelter," he says, "which demonstrates the power of mind over matter. Look at the amount of weight I moved just by thinking a little."

"You moved it, all right," Catty says; "but now what are we going to do with you?"

"Go away and mind your business," says Admiral Bean.

"No," says Catty. "I kind of like you. You're a cute little customer, and I'd like to keep you around."

"For a pet?" says the admiral, all bristled up and mad. "I am nobody's pet."

"Of course not," says Catty. "As a—er—a distinguished citizen."

"Now," says the admiral, "you begin to interest me."

"Can you play a horn?"

"No," says the admiral, "but I can whirl a drum major's stick almost as well as I can throw my voice. I practice it in private. Nobody knows, but that's my ambition. I'd rather be drum major of a band than to be the Mikado of Japan."

Catty slapped his leg and let out a holler. "How's that, Wee-wee?" he says. "Can't you see the admiral in one of our uniforms, marching ahead of the band with a great, high fur hat on his head and whirling a stick? Say! Wouldn't we come close to paralyzing the natives! Admiral, shake."

"What you talking about?"

"You," said Catty, "are unanimously elected drum major of our band, but it's got to be a secret. We'll keep you dark till the day of the big state band tournament, and then we'll spring you on the public. Oh, I guess we won't kind of stir up some excitement! How about it?"

"You mean—honest?—that you'll make a drum major out of me—that you will help me to realize my life's ambition—to reach the goal of my dreams?"

"You are now it," says Catty.

Admiral Bean did a dance and gave three cheers for himself, and was so tickled he almost flew into bits like a touch-me-not. When he sobered down a little we got three chairs and talked it over.

"The main thing," says Catty, "is to keep you a secret from everybody but the band."

"Sure," says the admiral.

"And how are we going to do it? Um! Where have you been sleeping?"

"Back there on the floor."

"Well, we'll fix you up a little bedroom and bring over blankets and everything to make you comfortable, and stock you up with grub, and I know where I can borrow an oil stove to cook on. You can have a regular country estate here, and Melchisideck Lovey won't mind at all. You'll be company for him."

"Suits me," says the admiral.

"And when the tournament is over and we've won the prize," says Catty, "we'll get you a dignified job like you want. Eh?"

"This," says the admiral, "has turned out to be the most fortunate night of my life."

"It's a bargain?"

"You bet."

Well, we fussed around and made the admiral as comfortable as we could that night, and talked some more, and then we told him good-by and went off home, and that was something I never expected to do—not feeling happy, anyhow. Which proves you never can tell. You go to do something that looks as if it was awful bad and was going to be a lot of trouble and nuisance, to say nothing of getting clawed up or stamped on by a ghost, and you don't want to do it, and you hang back and make a row. But then you go and do it like you ought to, and, *whang!* it turns out like this did. No, you never can tell. The only safe way is to tackle everything that comes along, and then you won't miss anything.

After we got across the bridge Catty says, "We been neglecting the first duty of a good officer."

"What?" I asked.

"Getting information about the enemy," he says.

"Huh!"

"We got to spy out Torrey Withey's band and see just what they're doing and how good they are and if they've got any tricks up their sleeve. We got to know all about them, so that, whatever they do, we can go them one better."

"Fine," says I. "Let's tackle it to-morrow."

"They have band practice afternoons," says Catty.

"Then," says I, "we'll sneak out and listen to them."

"But we got to be cautious," he says. "If Torrey Withey ever caught us when he had his gang around, he'd come pretty close to nailing our hides to the fence."

"And I'd rather keep mine stretched over my back," says I.

"I'm surprised," he says, "that they haven't paraded into town with their fine uniforms to give a concert and show us up."

"I bet they dassent—not after hearing us."

"Don't fool yourself," says Catty. "We're pretty good—if you never heard a band before—but there's better. Believe me, young feller, we got months of hard work ahead of us if we want to get anywhere. The folks

thought we were good, but that was just because we were kids, and they kind of wondered at it that we could play at all. But set us down alongside of a real band, and they'd give us the merry laugh. That's the truth."

"Maybe," says I, "but I will say there aren't many better clarinet players in the world than me. I don't go as far as the admiral and drag in the moon and the stars —but just on earth, why, I guess you'd have to look some to beat me."

"What I always liked about you is that you're so doggone modest," says Catty. "Now if you'd said that about me and my cornet you'd have been pretty close to the truth."

"If," says I, "I don't get some sleep pretty quick I won't have wind enough to blow a toy windmill."

"Nor me. I'm dog tired. This has been a pretty busy night, Wee-wee."

"Busy," says I, "isn't any name for it. One more like it and I'll have to paddle off to one of those rest cures. I'll have one of those nervous breakdowns you read about in the papers."

"I was close to it to-night when we got to the bridge," says he.

"Me," says I, "I wasn't scared at all. I liked it."

"The way you'd like to have your leg cut off with a dull saw," he says. "Well, anyhow, it's over, and we won't have anything like it to go through again. Just ordinary hard work from now on."

Which shows how much you can tell about what is going to happen next. I've heard some rotten guesses, but that one of Catty's was about the rottenest I ever noticed in a long experience. Over with. Huh! Say, what happened after that was such that anything that happened before just didn't happen at all. You couldn't notice it.

CHAPTER XVI

IT was the day after we caught Admiral Bean that Catty decided the strategy of the thing made it necessary for us to get information about the movements of the enemy. That was the one necessary thing to do, so far as he could see. We couldn't play better music than Withey's band, no matter how bad it was and no matter how good we were, unless we did some spying. It was the scientific thing, and so we had to do it. I didn't mind, because I was always willing to go out to the lake, and anyhow I was jammed full of curiosity to see what was going on. But I admitted what I had was curiosity, while Catty insisted his was scientific warfare. It didn't seem to me it mattered much what you called it—it looked like the same thing.

Well, we started to walk out right after dinner because we figured they wouldn't be practicing or anything earlier than that; but we didn't just take to the road and walk like ordinary human beings would. No, sir.

We had to scout around and crawl through marshes and climb trees to take observations, and capture small parties of the enemy to force them to give us information, and all that. It kind of made me tired and it took a lot of time and work, but Catty would have it.

"If you want to hear their old band play," says I, "why, let's go along till we get there and then hide in a clump of bushes and listen till our ears are tired. No use skinning our shins and ripping up our clothes this way."

He looked at me kind of sad and disappointed, and then he says: "Wee-wee, I'd think you'd be ashamed to talk like that. What kind of an adventure would it be without any trimmings? Tell me that. What would folks think of us? Who ever heard of folks going out on a dangerous and exciting mission the way you want to go? We'd get laughed at. There's a right way and a wrong way of doing everything, and a scientific way and a dub way. Anybody could just walk out there and listen. You could do that alone, but to have a real adventure with everything in that belongs and not a thing left out, why, that takes brains and planning and work."

"I'll say it does," says I. "Before I get there I'll be so tired out I won't be able to listen."

"You got to get used to hardships," says he. "They're good for you."

"So's castor oil," says I, "but you don't hear me teasing for it."

There was one spell when I had to lie with my nose in a mess of nettles for twenty minutes, and I didn't dare sneeze, because there was a large raiding party of the enemy stopped to eat not a hundred feet away. I couldn't see them, but they were as plain to Catty as a white house on a hill. Yes, sir, he could describe every one of them and how they were armed, and he told me what they were saying and everything. I kept hoping they would pack up and move on, but they stuck around for most half an hour and my face was sore for a week from the nettles. It would have been hard luck if Catty had decided they had camped there for the night. I don't suppose he thought of it, and you can bet I didn't suggest it any. We got there at last, even with all the fussing, and I was pretty glad of it.

There was a regular camp close to the house where the Witheys lived—about a

dozen small tents and a couple of big ones, and a flag pole with a flag on it, and a band stand. They sure did things up in style. Catty and I slunk up, crawling from tree to tree and bush to bush on our stomachs, just like we didn't have any legs to walk on. There wasn't anybody in sight, but we could hear a lot of yelling down by the lake and found out that the whole lot were in swimming.

"We're in luck," says Catty. "Nobody's in garrison, and no guards. Most careless thing I ever saw. Now we can pick out a good spot to see and hear from, and when they come back we'll be all ready for them."

"Pick a spot," says I, "that we can get away from as easy as we can get to it."

"Don't you worry," says he. "Just trust me and I'll save you all right."

"I don't want to be saved," I says. "What I want is not to get in a fix I've got to be saved from."

"If we could get to that ice house," Catty says, "and up the ladder, we could lie there on the sawdust as comfortable as bugs in a rug and see and hear everything that goes on."

"Fine," says I. "Make a dash for it."

"I'll go first," he says, "and if I live to reach it you follow."

"If you live?" says I.

"To pass through that machine-gun barrage," says he.

"Oh!" says I. "Well, I'm not afraid of a little thing like a bunch of machine guns. I thought maybe there was a dog or something."

"Good-by," says he. "If I fall, you carry the message through."

Now you couldn't beat that, could you? but I promised to carry it through, though I didn't know who to and it didn't matter that I could see. But it was something heroic, I'll bet, and Catty had it all fixed in his mind that our home town would build a monument for us in the square and keep wreaths on it.

"On your way," says I.

He made a break across the open and reached the ice house and shinned up the ladder to the opening where folks get the ice out. In a second he disappeared through the hole, and then he reached out his hand and waved it. With that I made a dash and got there safe, too, not even a machine-gun bullet through the heart.

"Well," says I, "it's cool and comfortable here, anyhow. Wonderful how fifty or sixty ton of ice will cool a place off."

"Ice!" says Catty. "Who told you it was ice? This is the treasure house. All the gold ingots of the Empire of Peru is here. See all the Incas fussing around down there. If we can get this gold to the ocean and aboard our ship, we'll be richer than anybody, and Pizarro 'll be sore and Queen Elizabeth 'll make us knights."

"Say," I says, for this was kind of sudden, "how about those machine guns? Pizarro didn't have machine guns."

"I didn't say machine guns," he says. "What I warned you about was arquebuses."

"Oh!" says I. "And we're sitting on a few dozen tons of gold, eh? Well, I haven't had much experience with gold, but this that we've found is awful chilly."

"Gold in great quantities," says Catty, "is always chilly. Sometimes it gets to the freezing point."

"Gosh!" says I. "What a lot of things you know!"

"Study does it," says Catty, as modest as a violet.

"I wish you wouldn't change so sudden,"

says I. "Here I just get used to machine guns, and the first I know I'm mixed up with Incas and Spaniards and arquebuses. It's too much for my head."

"Take a nap, then, and rest it," says he.

The sawdust was deep on top of the ice, and it was pretty comfortable, though it sifted down into our shoes and stuck all over our clothes; but we didn't have time to think about that. What I was wondering was how we were going to get out of the place after we had spied around all we wanted to. As soon as Withey's band came back from swimming they would be all over the place and somebody would be sure to see us. Anyhow, we were stuck where we were until their band practice was over, so there wasn't anything to do but make the best of it and pretend we liked it. I guess Catty liked it, all right.

We were there maybe fifteen minutes when boys commenced to straggle up from the lake and go into the little tents, and then, pretty soon, they came out again in uniforms, and, believe me, these uniforms were gorgeous. Whooee! Cream color and gold and all that. And when all of them were ready they took seats on the band stand and

out came their teacher and rapped on his music stand and talked some to them. After that they played, and it did seem to me they played pretty good. I wouldn't go so far as to say they played better than we did, but it is kind of hard to tell how your own band sounds when you are right in the middle of it. It doesn't sound as good as it does when you are off a piece so you can sort of have the racket come at you in one piece. But I'll admit they did good.

"What do you think?" Catty asked after the first piece.

"Fair," says I.

"Um . . . ! As good as us?"

"I haven't had time to judge yet," says I.

"I have," says Catty.

"What d'you think?"

"They got us skinned a mile."

"Rats!" says I. "They haven't, either. Why, they haven't got anybody skinned a mile! Maybe they're better than us, but not such a heap better that you can see it without glasses."

"They're a lot better. Anyhow," he says, "I got to tell our boys they are. Make 'em work harder. Throw a scare into them. It's what they call psychology."

"Oh!" says I. "Where'd you hear of that and what does it do when it's at home and comfortable?"

"Psychology," says Catty, "is a science."

"What kind of a science?"

"About thinking. You can't boss folks without knowing how their psychology works, and the more you know about it the better results you get."

"Where is the psychology located?" I wanted to know. "I got an idea where the stomach is, and where the gizzard is and some of those things, but no map I ever saw showed a fellow's psychology."

"It's in the head," says Catty.

"And you make it work by throwing a scare into anybody?"

"That's what I hear," he says.

"Well," I says, "since I've known you my psychology must have worked a lot, because most of the time you've had me scared of something or other. But, honest, do you think they play better than we do?"

"Well," says Catty, "to tell the truth, I don't know, but I guess so."

"Keep your head in," says I. "If Withey should happen to see us up here we'd get a

scare that would come pretty near making our psychology work so fast it would bust."

The band played a couple more pieces, and I liked them even better than the first. I don't know but I was getting to believe maybe they were better than we; anyhow, they got more time for practice and got taught more than we did. It was kind of discouraging, but then, I thought to myself, what if we don't win this prize? We'll still be alive. We'll have a band that can play, which is more than we had before, and we've had a lot of fun learning. Honest Injun, I thought, it really doesn't make much difference at all about that prize. So after that I felt pretty good, except for worrying about how ever we were going to get out of the ice house. I wish I didn't get scared, but I always do. There are fellows who never seem to be afraid, no matter what happens, but I'm not one of them. No, sir. It seems to me like I'm scared to death about half of the time.

After the band played maybe an hour they had a drill, and they drilled pretty good, too. Oh, you could see right off that they were making a business of it, and that if hard work would get them any place that was where

they were going to get. Then the drill broke up and the fellows scattered. It was about time we thought about getting out and home.

"Well," says I to Catty, "shall we make a dash for it?"

"What," says Catty, "and leave all this gold?"

"Eh?"

"I don't leave this place without at least a big nugget," he says, "to prove to the queen that we are telling the truth about the treasure."

"Queen Elizabeth?" I asked.

"Of course."

"But," says I, "what if Pizarro catches us sneaking off with a lump of his gold, or maybe the Incas?"

"We got to chance it," says he, and he commenced to dig in the sawdust.

"What 're you at?" I asked.

"Gold," says he.

"You don't mean," says I, "that you are going to dig out a hunk of ice and carry it off for gold! Now, say! I'm willing to pretend as far as anybody, but when it comes to lugging a fifty-pound cake of ice four or five miles through the woods, then I'm through. I quit making believe right then and there."

"Gold," says Catty.

"All right," I says, "and you can pretend you've got a camel to carry it for you—only you can't make believe I'm the camel."

He scratched around until he unearthed a good-sized lump, and then he said he was ready to go along.

"You go first," he says, "while I keep watch. Then I'll come right after you."

So we watched a few minutes and it looked like the coast was clear, so I backed through the opening and started down the ladder. I got down about four rungs when somebody below let out a holler, and I looked down and there was young Withey and two other kids looking up and letting out howls at me. I didn't wait for anything, not even an invitation, but just started up again and dived through the opening, head first, into Catty and the sawdust.

CHAPTER XVII

I GATHERED myself up and dug sawdust out of my eyes and my ear and my hair, and says, "Now look what you got us into."

"Keep cool," says Catty.

"We're in the right place to do that," I says. "If we can't keep cool in an ice house, then I guess we must be pretty hot."

"It's Withey," says Catty.

"No," says I, "it's Pizzaro and Queen Elizabeth, and I didn't want any company this afternoon, not even a queen."

Just then Withey lifted his voice and yelled: "Hey, you, what 're you doing in our ice house? Come out of there."

Neither of us said a word.

"Go up and haul 'em out by the neck," says Withey.

Well, at that Catty picked up his ingot of gold, which had turned into a cake of ice by now, and leaned out of the hole. "Better keep your little feet off the ladder," he says, "because this might slip out of my hands."

You could see right away that this discouraged them. Nobody was anxious a bit to climb the ladder, and I don't blame them. They kind of drew off for a council of war.

"Let 'em stay," says Withey. "It's that Catty Atkins and Wee-wee Moore, and they've come to spy around our band. Well, I guess we showed 'em how good we are, eh? And now we'll let 'em stay right there. I don't believe it's so awful comfortable in the ice house. No, sir, I guess it 'll be chilly before morning. What we'll do is to set a guard and just keep 'em tight."

"Fine!" says one of the other fellows. "We'll keep 'em prisoners."

"Sure. And I got another idea," says Withey, "that I'll tell you later."

So they left two fellows to watch, and gave them orders to holler if we tried to get out, and there we were.

"Nice mess, this is," says I. "We'll catch rheumatism and chills and pneumonia and everything, and most likely die right here before we can get to a doctor."

"It's grand," says Catty. "We've beaten a lot of heroes I've read about. Why, when did you ever hear of any adventurers being

made prisoner in an ice house? It's great. It's first class."

"I'd rather be shut up," says I, "in a nice warm pantry where there was plenty of food."

"We're in a dongeon of the Spanish Inquisition," says Catty, all happy again.

"I thought they always burned you at the stake," says I. "I never heard tell of their putting anybody in cold storage."

"It 'll be a great achievement to escape from this," he says.

"Let's not wear medals for it until we do it."

"Don't you worry. We'll escape."

"All right," says I. "I'm ready now. Come along."

"You can't escape from this sort of dongeon in a second," he says. "It takes planning, and maybe years of work."

"Years. Huh! Well, I guess I'll keep in this climate—like eggs or butter. I'm going to burrow down to the ice so I'll freeze up quick. I hope it freezes my appetite so it don't work. I'm half starved already."

"Then eat a chunk of ice," says Catty, "while I think."

He sat on the damp sawdust for five min-

utes and figured, and then he got up and looked out, but there were the guards, and as soon as he showed his head they shied a club at him, so that he jerked back pretty quick. "I tell you," says he, "we can dig down, prying out cakes of ice and piling them up until we have a well right to the ground, and then we can tunnel under."

"Fine," says I. "It ought to be good exercise."

"What you need," says he, "isn't exercise for your muscles. It's exercise for your head."

"Fine," says I, "and I got a scheme. It's a hard one, too, and not many folks could think it up quick."

"Go ahead," says he. "What is it?"

"Why," says I, "just kick out a board at the back there and crawl through it and drop."

"Huh! And you call that a plan!"

"Looks to me like one."

"And I'll bet you there's somebody watching the back of this dongeon as well as the front."

"Let's find out," I says. And so we went to the back, and there was a knot hole we could peek through, which we did. Catty

was right. There, with his back against a tree, was another sentry, keeping his eye on the rear of the ice house.

"Well," I says, "maybe I didn't think so bright, after all. You take a turn and see what comes of it."

"I wonder," says Catty, "what Withey meant when he said he had a scheme. I bet he meant something we wouldn't like."

"Let's not worry about his scheme until we think up one of our own. I'm getting chilblains."

"It's no use trying while it's light."

"D'you mean we got to stay here till night? It doesn't get dark until half past eight, and that's two hours past supper time. Oh, say! We got to get away before that."

"Suits me," says Catty. "Just manage it and I'll come along without a kick."

That was all there was to that. I'd done my thinking for one day and nobody reasonable would ask me to do any more, so I quit and went to the opening in front and filled my hat with sawdust and dropped it down on the sentries below. I guess they didn't like it from the way they talked. It was kind of monotonous, waiting, and finally I says to Catty: "Isn't there anything we

can start on—just to pass away the time?"

"Yes," says he. "Go over there close to the eaves and take your knife and cut away about two shingle lath—so, when the time comes, we can just force out the shingles and get up on the roof."

"What do we want to get up on the roof for?"

"To look at the stars," says Catty, and I saw there wasn't any getting anything out of him. So off I went, and in half an hour I had cut away the shingle lath like he said and was all ready.

"It 'll be drier on the roof, anyhow," says I, "if it don't rain."

"I hope there's a tree close," says he.

Well, we waited and waited and waited, and it got dusk, and then it got dark, and then he says to me: "You go to the door there and commence to throw things down at the sentinels. Keep 'em as busy as you can. Make 'em good and mad."

"Fine!" says I. "I guess there are some kind of small chunks of ice that 'll irritate 'em." And so I started in. First I threw sawdust, and then some sticks I found, and then I began to heave small pieces of ice.

"Hey, you! Quit that," says one of the sentinels.

"Come on up and make me," says I.

"We'll make you, all right. Just wait till we get hold of you."

"I'm so impatient I can't wait," says I. "Come on along now," and with that I heaved a chunk that came so close to him he decided to get behind a tree. Then Catty touched me on the shoulder and whispered to me to lay down a regular barrage for a couple of minutes and after that to quit and come to where I'd cut away the shingle lath, and scramble up on the roof. I did like he said, and there we both were up on the shingles and like to slide off the steep roof and bust our necks.

"It's fine and airy here," I says, "but I like it on the ground."

"If you're in a hurry jump," he says. "It's so dark I can't see a thing."

He started out to work his way along the roof, and I stayed close by him because I was kind of lonesome, and pretty soon he shoved his face into a mass of leaves and knew there was a tree there. After that it was easy. We crawled along the limb and climbed down and lit out for home. It was

as easy as could be. We went pretty cautious until we were in the woods, and then we hurried. Just before we got to town Catty stopped and says, "I got a presentiment."

"Find it in the ice house?"

"It just come to me."

"Goin' to keep it or send it away?"

"Don't you know what a presentiment is?"

"Not the kind that comes up to a fellow in the woods. What is one?"

"It's a kind of a warning of disaster."

"Outch!" says I.

"I feel it in my bones that something terrible has happened."

"I feel it in my stomach that I'm three hours late for supper, and you watch me skedaddle for home."

"I'm going to the island," says he.

"What for?"

"On account of the presentiment," says he. "I feel that the evil that has happened has happened there."

"Oh," says I, "and what kind of evil is it?"

"That," he says, "is what I aim to find out."

"Huh! . . . A fellow who goes around with you ought to carry a loaf of bread and

a can of sardines. You got no more respect for meal times than a cat has for canary birds. Go ahead. Starve me to death if you want to, but tell my folks how it happened and that I passed away happy."

But he was so worried he wouldn't talk, and set off almost at a run, and kept on running until we came to the bridge to Big Hole Island, and then across and through the underbrush to the pavilion.

"Hey, Admiral! Admiral Bean!" Catty yelled, but there wasn't any answer. He kept on calling as he ran, but the admiral never answered a word. And Catty turned to me and says: "Didn't I tell you? Something dreadful's happened."

" 'Cause the admiral don't answer? Huh! Maybe he's just gone for a walk."

"He's gone farther than that," says Catty, "and I bet we never see the admiral again."

"Rats!" says I.

"Wait and see," says he. And so we hustled on to the pavilion and lighted a lantern we had hidden close to the edge, and then I knew Catty was a pretty good hand at presentiments, because in a second you could see something was wrong. I ran to the place where we kept our music and in-

struments, and then I hollered to Catty so that he came running, too.

"Didn't I tell you?" he says.

"You did," says I.

"Gone," says he.

"Stolen," says I.

"All that work and trouble," says he, "and just because we didn't guard it! It's terrible! What 'll folks think of us now?"

"I'm not thinking about folks," says I. "What I want to know is who did it. Who came and busted in here and carried off all our horns and drums and music and uniforms, that's what I want to know. And when I find out, you can bet there's going to be something happen that you can hear for seven city blocks."

"But why," says Catty, "did they steal Admiral Bean?"

"Maybe it was the circus he ran away from."

"Maybe, but I don't believe it. No. I bet they took him prisoner because he tried to stop them, and saw them and knew who they were."

"We got to rescue him," says I.

"To-night," says Catty.

"But we don't know who to suspect, nor where they're gone. We haven't a clew."

"Fetch the lantern," says Catty, "and we'll look for clews. We'll hunt down the miscreants before morning, and show no mercy. Take it slow and easy, because I don't want to miss a hair or a footprint. Somebody's going to be sorry for this night's work."

"I hope," says I, "that it won't be you and me."

CHAPTER XVIII

ANYBODY can see right off that a band without any horns to play on isn't much good. There isn't anything you can *use* it for unless it is to mow lawns or run errands, and it would look kind of funny to see all the grass in town being cut by fellows with gorgeous uniforms on, or a drum major running to the store for a pound of sugar. That was what I thought of first. Old Granddad Poover might as well go to a beefsteak dinner without his false teeth as for us to go to a band tournament without our instruments.

But Catty wasn't thinking about that. As near as I could make out he was tickled. Honest Injun, he acted like he was glad, and I knew why. It was just like him. Now he had a mystery on his hands and could be a detective and imagine a lot of nonsense and have a bully time. It was going to be hard on me, I could see that. Now if I had it to do, I'd just start out to look, but not Catty. He had to frost it all over with doo-days and

whang-gangles, and make believe this and that until I got dizzy trying to keep up with him. For a while he was kind of undecided what it was all about, and couldn't make up his mind whether we were some kind of priests in a temple that had been robbed of its sacred treasure, or were an expedition trying to restore the princess to her throne and the wicked usurper had come and swiped all our arms and ammunition—and the princess to boot. Admiral Bean was the princess, and you can't beat that much. So that was what he decided on. We had to rescue the princess and get back our swords and lances and war horses and all that. I never saw any princesses, but if Admiral Bean looked like one, then you'll never find me bothering my head any about rescuing one of them. Somebody else can have my share and welcome.

"Now," says Catty, "the usurper has gone and sneaked in here, into this mountain fastness, and carted off the whole shooting match, and he's got the princess in chains in some dongeon or other, and most likely he'll starve her to death, or let in water slow and drown her."

"What for would he do that?" says I.

"It's the style," says Catty. "In things like this there's always a style that you got to follow."

"Then," says I, "if you know the style, it ought to be easy to catch them. Just you go and act in the style of a fellow that rescues a princess, and there you are. All the stories I ever read came out right, and the princess was saved and the hero married her and got to be king. Gee! I'd like to see you married to the admiral and get to be king of our town back there."

"There isn't any admiral," says he. "There's a princess with wonderful flaxen hair and blue eyes and a bunch of diamonds as big as gobs of chewing gum strung around her neck, and a ruby in her hair. She's prob'ly the most beautiful princess that ever was, though she's an orphan."

"Oh!" says I. "So the king's dead? What did he die of?"

"Assassination," says Catty. "That's what kings ought to die of, ain't it? It's dignified and fitting. You wouldn't have a king die of the grippe or croup, would you? No, sir. A self-respecting king always gets assassinated."

"Did they arrest the assassins?"

"This usurper is the assassin," says he, "and it's our duty to bring him to justice and have him drawn and quartered, and the four chunks of him hung up on the gates of the city as a warning."

"Not this weather," says I. "The board of health wouldn't let us."

"Huh!" says Catty. "We can be the board of health if we want to."

Now I admired that. It's how he always overcame difficulties. You'd think he was in a hole nobody could get him out of, and then, quick as a wink, he'd just imagine himself out as slick as grease.

"Anyhow," says I, "sitting here and talking isn't going to rescue any princess or get back any war horses."

"We got to look for clews," says he.

"Clews are in detective stories," says I, "and I never heard of one in a princess story."

"There are in this one," he says. "Now, Sir Mortimer," he says to me, "you slip into your shirt of mail, because there may be assassins lurking around, and I'll do the same, and together we'll see if the Wicked Duke has left any footprints or finger marks or anything." He stopped all of a sudden.

"Say," he says, "I bet he made a descent in his war galleys and carried off the whole shooting match by sea. The first thing we'll do is make a trip around the shore of this mountainous islet and see if there are any marks of a landing party."

"Good," says I. "It sounds as if maybe the duke had sense."

"The duke," says he, "is the brainiest antagonist I ever had to run up against, Sir Mortimer."

"And who be you?" says I.

"Me? What a question! I'm the White Knight that nobody knows but you, and I'm so doggone mysterious that folks' hair stands on end and everybody in the realm wonders if I'm not just a ghost. But you know I'm not. You know who I am."

"Gee! I'm glad," says I. "Who do I know you are?"

"I'm the disinherited son of the King of England, that was the victim of a base plot."

"Well," I says, "you picked out a high job for yourself."

"Yes, but when I get restored to my throne you're going to be made an earl, and you'll be commander-in-chief of all my armies and

ambassador to France and first groom of the bedchamber."

"NO! Honest?"

"My liege servant," says he, "I promise it by mine halidom."

"What's a halidom?"

He just looked at me scornful. "Come on," says he, "and help look for clews. Sometimes I think you're dumb."

"Maybe I'm dumb," says I, "but 'halidom' wasn't ever in any spelling lesson I ever learned."

So we started out, and the edge of the island was pretty marshy, and if there was ever a king and a knight got in mud up to their eyebrows it was us. You never saw royalty in such a state. I knew I'd taste mud for a week. Thank goodness it was warm, anyhow. We floundered around and splashed and tripped and bumped into things for an hour without finding a thing, and, anyhow, if we had we couldn't have seen it because it was so dark. Catty wouldn't quit, though, because it was more romantic to hunt in the dark like that. But after a while I fell flat and shoved my hand down on a piece of paper. I picked it up, not with any

HE DOES BEAT ALL. HE BELIEVED THERE WAS A PRINCESS AND A DUKE. HONEST

idea I'd found anything, and mentioned it casual.

"Fetch it here," says Catty. "Maybe the princess has wrote us a message."

He threw the light on it, and what d'you suppose it was? It was a piece of our band music.

"There," says Catty, "I told you I'd find a clew."

"You!" says I. "Who fell on it flat as a pancake?"

"It was I," says Catty, "who ordered you to dive off the precipice into a thousand feet of water and fetch it up from the bottom."

"Anyhow," I says, "you got to admit I'm some diver."

"It means," says Catty, "that the miscreants came along here. Now we know where to look. In this neighborhood we ought to find the prints where their war galleys were beached and hundreds of the footprints of the invading hordes."

"They must near have stomped the island flat," says I.

We started to hunt careful around there, and, sure enough, we found where a couple of boats had been dragged through the reeds and up on to the mud, and then we found

quite a mess of footprints that showed how a number of savage warriors in full armor had landed there. Catty was the one who deduced they were in full armor because they sank so deep in the mud. It was the weight of the steel helmets and things that made them do it. The spot around there had been used a lot that night, and it was easy to see it was here the Wicked Duke had landed his party and made away with our princess. Every time I thought of her I snickered. I says to myself that if the duke ever woke up and took a look at what he'd caught, he'd have a cat fit. Yes, sir. If I went to a lot of trouble to swipe a princess, and when I got her under a light I found she looked like the admiral, I'd tie a brick around her neck and drown her in a pail of water. As for me, when I go out hunting a princess I want to catch one that looks like a princess. There's enough disappointments in life without that.

"Now the question," says Catty, "is which way they went. Did they man their galleys and row up the coast or down the coast, or did they put straight to sea and make for the duke's island stronghold?"

"I'll bet," says I, "they made for the lake."

"What lake?" says Catty.

"The only one there is in this neighborhood," says I. "The one where Withey lives and where his band hangs out."

"What names are these?" says he, making believe he didn't understand. "The thing you call a lake is really an island, all fortified and teeming with men-at-arms, and this name Withey—there isn't any such person. It's the Wicked Duke."

"A cow," says I, "keeps on giving milk whether you call her a sunflower or a brick house."

"Undoubtedly," he says, "they made for the enchanted forest where the dragons hang out, following the sea until they found the secret landing place, and there they disembarked to carry their booty and the princess to some hidden castle."

"Shouldn't wonder," says I, "but if I was doing this I'd have a look around those summer cottages."

"Sir Mortimer," says Catty, "you're wood."

"Wood?" I says. "Maybe I am. But I'd as soon be wood as lots of things I know of.

Wood is useful to make chairs out of and to burn——"

"The kind of wood I mean isn't," says he. "Wood means crazy. Didn't you ever read about King Arthur and his knights, and how some of them were wood?"

"I've got about all I can stand," says I. "Now listen. What would happen to a fellow if he went to the asylum and says, 'Mister, I come to see some of your wooden folks'? They'd shut *him* up, that's what would happen. No, sir. When a man's crazy, and when a house is wood it isn't brick, and that's that."

"I wonder how much start they got," he says.

"They wouldn't come down till after dark. It wouldn't be safe. They wouldn't go monkeying around when anybody could see them, and so I bet they didn't start till half past eight, anyhow. It would take an hour to row down here, and maybe half an hour to swipe the stuff. In that case they can't have more than an hour or an hour and a half start."

"Fine!" says he. "We will pursue and surround them, and exterminate this nest of vipers."

"Suits me to a dot," says I. "Then you think they went up the river?"

"I know it," says he.

"If I was them," says I, "I wouldn't have. I'd have gone down. It would fool everybody. If I was this Wicked Duke I'd act so as to throw suspicion off of myself."

"He hasn't got brains enough," says Catty.

"It wouldn't take much to figure out what I said."

"We can easy tell when we get to where the river narrows and past the fork," he says. "If the duke came down from his island, he'd come down the brook, and the brook is near to grown full of watercress, so that you almost have to drag a boat over it. You know that as well as I do. And if a boat has come down there, we can tell it as easy as rolling off a log."

"Right you are," says I, "and if no boat has been there, then we'll deduce that that's where a boat hasn't been."

"Now you're coming," says he.

"Do we walk?"

"We borrow Melchisideck Lovey's boat," says Catty. "He told me I could use it when I want to. It isn't chained."

"Maybe the duke stole that, too."

"He wouldn't, because what he was after was the princess and the arms. He wouldn't get himself into any trouble with Mr. Lovey, because he knows Mr. Lovey is the most powerful sorcerer in the world and would cast a spell on him that would put him out of business. No. You won't find any dukes mixing up in Mr. Lovey's business."

"Say," I says, "I bet Mr. Lovey would be tickled to death to find out who he is. If he knew he was a sorcerer he'd start in by doing some magic to his ears."

"His deafness," says Catty, "is a part of his magic power. He can't hear what ordinary folks can, so that he can hear what can't be heard except by enchanted ears."

"Enchanted ears! Whee! Next time I see him I'm going to holler and ask how his enchanted ears are, and he'll probably answer by taking his enchanted foot and using it to kick me under my enchanted coat tails. Whoop!"

"We're wasting time. Dawn comes on apace."

"Let her rip," says I. "Who rows the boat? It's a doggone leaky old scow, and it pulls like all-git-out."

"Would it be fitting," Catty says, "for the uncrowned King of England to pull an oar?"

"I knew that's about how it would turn out," says I. "Next time I'm going to be something more lazy than an earl. You might as well be a laboring man."

So we struck off for the tree where Mr. Lovey had his boat tied.

CHAPTER XIX

DID you ever try to row up a river on a dark night? I never knew quite how dark it could be before. The shadows from both sides come out and lie down on the water so that you can't tell where the shores are or where you're going; and if you get any place at all, it's more on account of good luck than good judgment.

We found Mr. Lovey's boat and got in. I was kind of sore about rowing, but after we got started I had to laugh, because the old thing leaked so hard that Catty had to work harder bailing than I did at the oars, and I says, "Well, Your Majesty, it's good kings haven't any prejudices against dipping water, because if they had we'd sink."

He didn't say much to that.

I rowed and rowed and ran aground and got off again and it was chilly and the mosquitoes found out we were there and took a taste. I guess they liked the flavor, because they went off and told their families about us, and *they* came and took a taste, and

pretty soon about all the skeeters in that vicinity had tried us out and satisfied themselves about it. There were so many places on me I wanted to scratch that I couldn't settle on any to go to work at. Just as I'd reach a finger nail after one itch another would start up, and I'd go for that, and before I got any good out of it up would start another, and so on. It was mighty uncomfortable.

Catty didn't say much, but just bailed and bailed and bailed—and then it started to get kind of glowish in the east, and a breeze stirred and fish began to jump, and birds made kind of chippery, waking-up sounds. By that time we were almost to the fork where the brook comes down from the lake. By the time we got to it we could see real clear, and in we turned.

It was one of those winding brooks that are kind of deep in the channel, but stretch off with marshy banks and reeds and water things growing higher than your head, and cat-tails and tall stalks with blue flowers on them. You could row all day long without anybody being able to see you from the shore. It was a fine place for bass. I know

because I've got a lot of them there one time and another.

Well, after a while the brook got narrower and narrower on account of the watercress. There was acres of it, and it kept crowding in to the middle, so that in spots there was only about a foot of water between, and sometimes you couldn't see anything but green. And there were shallow places where we had to stand up and pole with the oars to squeeze over, and a couple of times we had to get out and push.

What we noticed when we got here was that the watercress had been mashed and crushed. You could tell as plain as could be that somebody had been there not long before, and this kind of cheered us up, because we knew we were on the right track.

"What we got to keep our eyes open for now," says Catty, "is where the Wicked Duke made a landing."

"I bet he went right through to the lake," says I. "He would if he had any sense. We can tell where he lands here, but if he went on, why, we'd have to search the whole shores of the lake—and if he got out on a stony place we couldn't discover anything *then*."

"I think," says Catty, "he'll get out along this brook."

"Why?"

"Because he'll be afraid some of the neighbors would see him and what he had, if he goes on. No. He'll stop here some place in the woods, and go to a secret castle, and put the princess in a dongeon."

"Poor princess!" says I.

Catty looked at me kind of suspicious, but I kept a straight face, and that was all right. He does beat all. He *believed* there was a princess and a duke. Honest. All the time he knew there wasn't one, and that what we were after was a dwarf and band instruments, but, just the same, he believed what he was pretending. I don't see how he managed it, but he did. I had to laugh. Now I couldn't believe anything like that. I got to see a thing before I believe it, and no amount of fussing would make a circus dwarf look like a princess to me. No, sir

So we kept at it, and after a while, sure enough, there was a place where the boats had forced a way off to the right through the reeds and things. We could see how they were bent down and broken, and then we got real cautious.

"The duke 'll leave sentries," says Catty, "and men-at-arms to guard his booty. He wouldn't go off on a foray like this and not take good care of what he stole."

"But," says I, "there isn't any place to hide it in here."

"There must be," says Catty, "or he wouldn't have done it. Maybe they raised a castle by enchantment."

"If he did," says I, "it's a dirty trick, and I got a notion to have nothing to do with it."

"They won't suspect we found out about it yet," says Catty, "and they got no idea whatever the White Knight and Sir Mortimer, his faithful retainer, is in this part of the world. They think we been off on a crusade."

"Oh!" says I. "What made 'em think that?"

"Because we were, as everybody knows," Catty says. "But we finished it up and got home unexpected."

"Did we have any luck?"

"We killed most a million Paynim," says Catty.

"We done good. That must 'a' been almost a world's record," says I.

"Now keep still. The shore can't be far off."

"It's easy to follow this track," says I. "I haven't a lot of respect for this Iron Duke of yours. He can't be bright. If I was getting away with something I wouldn't set out to leave a track like this."

"Maybe," says Catty, "it's a trap."

"If it is," says I, "we're takin' steps to fall into it."

"With our good swords," says he, "we'll fight our way out again."

"That sounds good," says I, "but we might bust our swords. Then we'd get us a couple of black eyes."

"What we ought to do is to blow a trumpet and send in a challenge."

"Just one toot," says I, "and the fat would be in the fire. No. We won't do any tooting or challenging. From now on there isn't going to be any chivalry in mine. Nope. I'm going to be quiet and sneaky like a private detective. That's me. You can jam around with a lance all you want to, but you'll have to do it alone."

"After all," he says, "getting back the princess is what counts, and not how we do

it. Maybe we'd better combat black magic with caution."

"That sounds awful good to me," says I.

"Here we are," says he in a whisper. "I hope to goodness they haven't set a guard."

"I don't see anybody. Say, if they landed here, what do you suppose they did it for? There isn't anything around here. It's way out in the middle of the woods."

"They had their reasons," says Catty, "and it's up to us to find out what they are. We better drag this scow off some place where it won't be seen. Maybe they'll be coming back this way."

"They went away in the boats," says I, "and the boats are gone."

"It won't be so easy to track them from now on—when the ground gets high and dry."

"Yes," says I, "but they must have been making for somewhere. The thing for us to do is to look around and figure out what it is. If we see anything likely we can make a bee line for it."

So we stowed the scow about fifty feet downstream in thick reeds, and then went back to the landing place to see what we could find out. Catty made believe he was

astonished because there weren't any hoof-marks, because, he said, a man of the duke's quality couldn't be expected to walk.

"Maybe he had a soldier carry him on his back," says I.

"Never in the world," he says. "It wouldn't be dignified enough."

"There was quite a lot of them," I says, "if this trampling is any indication." There was so much of it that there wasn't any trouble at all following through the woods. They had made a regular path. It looked to me as if a dozen folks had stamped up and down there, and it stood to reason there must have been quite a few, because it would take quite a crowd to carry all the band stuff, to say nothing of Admiral Bean. We followed the track for maybe a half a mile. The woods were pretty thick and you couldn't see far ahead, but for all that we began to go as cautious as we could and keep out of sight and listen. We didn't see or hear a thing.

Off to one side was a kind of a hill. It went up steep for maybe fifty feet, and we scrambled up this and took a good look. At first we couldn't see anything but treetops stretching away from us, green and bulging

almost as far as we could look, but then Catty touched my arm.

"Sir Mortimer," he says, "isn't that smoke?"

"Looks like it," I says.

We kept on watching, and pretty soon we were sure. There couldn't be any doubt of it. Smoke was coming up, and if there was smoke somebody must have lighted a fire, and who was there to light a fire way out there but the folks we were after? It looked about half a mile away.

"It's from the kitchens of the castle," says Catty. "The varlets are getting breakfast for the duke."

"You better not let 'em hear you call them that," says I.

"It's what they are," he says, as sober as a judge. "The books always call them kitchen varlets."

"All right. But maybe they haven't read the same books you have," I says, "and they might not like it."

"Well," he says, "we're not out this morning to pay compliments. Before that sun rises high above the trees it will look down upon bloodshed and slaughter."

"If it does, I hope I'm allowed to pick out the slaughtered ones," says I.

"Why tarry we here?" Catty says, kind of grand.

"Why what we which?"

"Aw, shucks!" says he. "Can't you get in the spirit of the thing?"

"Yes, but I like to get my verb in the right place, and I ain't much on tarryin'. What I do is loaf."

"Get a move on. You can understand that, can't you?"

"Watch me," says I, and off we started again. This time you can believe we didn't make any racket, and it would have taken a pretty sharp lookout to see even the tips of our noses, because we crawled and hid behind bushes and did all the Indian stuff we knew. It took us quite a while to get within sight of the place where the fire was, and then all we could see at first was the smoke rising up from a hollow.

We crept to the brink of this and looked over, and there was Catty's enchanted castle and all. There was two of it, and it had been put up in a night, just like Aladdin's. Maybe in less than a night. These fellows probably beat the genii all to pieces. I could have. I

could have put up both the castles in an hour —because they were tents.

The tents were set to face each other, and I could have picked out a lot better location with my eyes shut, but there they were with a fire going and a couple of fellows getting breakfast. I could have managed to make trouble for a couple of eggs and some bacon and toast and a cup of coffee, myself. The time to eat breakfast is in the morning, and not the next night, as it looked as if we would do to-day.

"Think up some way of driving those varlets out of the kitchen," says I, "because I need food."

"So do I," says Catty, "but where a damsel in distress is waiting, brave knights can't wait——"

"For fried cakes and coffee," says I. "Maybe not, and the next time I go out rescuing I'm going to carry a lunch."

"How many men-at-arms are there?" he asked.

"I don't see anything but varlets," I says.

"The men-at-arms must be there."

"Perchance," says I, remembering a word out of a book—"perchance they slumber."

Well, at that Catty was like to swallow his

Adam's apple, and I don't know that I blame him. But he didn't dare start anything because the enemy was so close.

"We can count 'em," he says, "when they come out for breakfast."

"Which one of these dongeons do you figure the princess is in?"

He gave me another look, but he didn't say anything. He doesn't like being made fun of any better than most folks.

There wasn't anything to do for a spell but just wait and watch, so we did all of both these things there was time for. Maybe it would have been better to divide them up—Catty to watch and I to do the waiting—but we didn't. Neither of us cared how hard he worked.

Then one varlet hollered breakfast and four more fellows that were either varlets or men-at-arms came out of the tent and sat down to eat. That was how many we had to worry about. Six to two. Not so pleasant, was it?

"I guess," says I to Catty, "you better think up a scheme."

CHAPTER XX

"FIRST thing to find out," says Catty, "is where they've got the princess."

"And the second is where is the bass drum," says I. "I'd rather look for a bass drum than a princess. It's going to be pretty hard work to hide a drum."

"I think," says Catty, "they're all in the other tent. Everybody came out of the tent closest to us. Maybe they all sleep in that one, and use the other to store the stuff."

"Tent!" says I. "Where's a tent? I don't see anything but two stone castles raised up by magic."

"Huh!" says he. And then we saw one of the boys take a cup of coffee and a plate of victuals into the second tent. "That means," Catty says, "that the princess is there." When he said princess I knew we were back on the track again and wouldn't have any more nonsense about tents.

"Then," says I, "let's rescue her."

"We can't just charge in. There's too many of them."

"What then?"

He thought a minute, and then slapped his leg. "Tunnel," says he. "We'll dig in and spirit her away."

"Golden hair and all?" says I.

We crawled back a piece and made a big circuit around the tents, and then crept close again. It was so we could get almost to the tent where we thought the admiral was without getting out of the bushes that grew all around. We could lie there and almost stretch out our hands and touch the canvas. But, of course, we knew it wasn't canvas at all—at least Catty did. He knew it was stone walls a dozen feet thick.

"We'd better start to tunnel," says he.

"Yes," says I, "or the princess will have gray hair instead of gold before we finish up." And with that I got out my jackknife. "Here's a shovel and pick to go at it with," I says.

"What are you up to?"

"Going to dig a tunnel through those walls and see what we come to."

It looked pretty safe to ooze out of the bushes to the tent, so we did it, and then I cut a little peekhole through, and there, sure enough, were all our band instruments, and

tied to the tent pole, sitting in a chair, was the admiral, silk hat and all. I was going to speak to him, but Catty clapped his hand over my mouth.

"Don't speak through the dongeon window," he says. "We may raise false hopes."

"Sure," I says. And then, looking at him kind of sideways: "My! but ain't she beautiful! I don't call to mind ever seeing a princess half so good-looking. I bet she'd take a prize in any court in Europe."

"Lemme think," says Catty. So we both sneaked back into the bushes and Catty he scrunched down and thought and thought.

"We can't get away with the arms and armor without help," he says, "but we can get away with the princess. Now maybe we can tunnel in, break off her fetters, and rescue her. After that I guess we'll have to go back to town and collect our retainers and make an attack in force."

"Suits me to a tee," says I. "Come on."

So once more we slid up to the tent, and this time I cut quite a gash, but before we slipped through it we looked all around to make sure nobody could see us, or acted as if they were coming into the tent. Then Catty crawled in and I after him. The ad-

miral didn't see us till Catty touched his leg, and then he gave a sort of a grunt; but Catty motioned him to be still. And then we knocked off his shackles—but it looked more like cutting some rope to me—and crawled out with him. And the princess was all rescued. But that was easy. Getting the stuff was something else, I can tell you.

"Your Majesty," says I to the princess, "we come as soon as we could, because we didn't know what that Wicked Duke might do to you. We was afraid," says I, "he might take it into his head to cut off your golden locks, and then where would you have been?"

Well, sir, he was that mad in a minute I thought he was going to climb up my leg and bite me, because he didn't know he was a princess and thought I was making fun of him. But Catty explained, and he agreed to be a princess if that would do anybody any good. He said he'd be a polar bear if folks he liked asked it as a favor. So that was settled.

"I kind of hate," says Catty, "to have to go for help. The kind of knights and heroes we are never asked for anything better than to tackle awful odds."

"We can tackle them," says I, "but as for carrying close to a ton of horns back to town, why, you can count me out. It ain't fit for a knight that's going to be promoted to an earl to go around the country lugging brass horns."

"And," says Catty, "we ought to teach these miscreants a lesson."

"Teach 'em the whole book," says I.

"The Wicked Duke isn't here," says Catty. "It would be too bad to do a deed on these men, with him away."

"Maybe he'll show up," says I. "What I'm interested in right now is what they're going to say when they discover we've rescued the admiral."

"Hush!" says the admiral. "Here comes somebody. I hear him calling."

Sure enough, somebody was yelling back in the woods, and pretty soon Torrey Withey came through the trees, looking as happy as a cat that's eaten a canary. He stopped in front of the tent and you could see he was asking how things were, and then he stepped inside. In about half a jerk of a lamb's tail he was out again, looking as if he'd sat down on a bumblebee.

"Hey!" he yelled. "Where is he? What's become of him?"

Then everybody made a dash in, and out they came in a bunch, looking pretty blank, I can tell you.

"He must have got loose," says one boy.

"A fine lot you are, to be left to guard anybody," Withey says. "By now he's headed for town and he'll be back with the constable or somebody."

"Then we better clear out," says another fellow.

"And leave all these band things?"

"You bet."

"No, siree. We've got 'em, and we're going to keep 'em. If we go we'll take them with us."

"How?"

"I drove down in the little wagon. Left it back in the road. Maybe, if I drive careful, I can get right down here and we can load everything on. Then we can cover the horns with the tent, so nobody will see what we've got."

"What then?"

"Why, find another place to hide them! I don't want that bunch of Catty Atkins'

to get them back. We want to win that prize, don't we?"

"You bet."

"Then one of you come with me, and we'll see if we can get the horse and wagon through the woods."

So at that Withey and a boy started off, and Catty and the admiral and I went back where we'd be safe to kind of make a plan if we could think one up. It always sounds easy to make a plan, but when it comes down to thinking out one that will work, why, that's a different matter. Anybody can make a plan. I can make one just as easy. But the way to find out how much a plan is worth is to try it; there isn't any other way. Then, if it works it's a good plan, but if it doesn't work, it's a bad plan and there you are. A fellow who can think up a dozen good plans a year is some pumpkins, because most folks couldn't think up one in a dozen years.

But Catty was one of the sort who can think 'em, and then make 'em run, too. The admiral and I sat down and watched him while he went at it, and it was something to see. Yes, sir, you could almost hear his brain click.

"Got one yet?" says I, after a while.

"No," he says.

"Well, you better get a wiggle on," says I, "because here comes Withey with his wagon. You haven't got all the legislative session to think it over, like you was a Senator or something."

"You see what you can do," says he.

"Now, my young friends," says the admiral, "each of you stick to his job, and no interference, and we'll all come out right. I feel I shall yet live to see the day when I march at the head of your band as its drum major."

"I hope your feelings come true," says I. "There goes the wagon. He's got it right up to the tent and in a minute they'll be loading on our horns."

"I fear," said the admiral, "we should have appealed to the authorities."

"If I did," says Catty, "I never could show my face again or hold up my head. The idea of us going to the constable or the town marshal for help! Admiral, it couldn't be done. No, siree. We're not beaten yet."

"Try some enchantment," says I.

"Um . . . ! Maybe there's something in that," he says. "You watch and keep me

posted. I'm going to think something out or bust."

"Good!" I says. "Here comes the bass drum, and there goes an armful of saxophones, and there's a box of music. They've got all we own, lock, stock, and barrel."

The admiral and I kept on watching while they loaded everything in the body of the wagon, and then, careful as anything, but hurrying all they could, they started back toward the road.

"Catty," says I, "if your plan's ever going to hatch, it's about time for it to be busting its shell. They're starting off."

"Nothing yet," he says. "There's seven of them, counting Withey, and only two and a quarter of us, counting the admiral. We can't do a thing, not by making an attack. We got to do it by thinking."

"You hinted that before," I says, "but where's it got us?"

"Come on," says he. "Anyhow, we can follow them."

"To be sure," says I, "we can trail them to the new hiding place, if they find one, and that 'll give us more time to plan."

So we followed as closely as we dared. All at once we heard a yell, and hustled so

we could see what was the matter. When we got there we saw that a back wheel of the wagon had hit a rock or something and just caved in. They only had three wheels. And there is where the admiral's enthusiasm got the best of him. He just got up on a log and flapped his arms like a rooster and crowed.

Well, sir, you could have knocked me over with a feather. I never heard anything so silly in my life, and I jerked the little fellow down so quick I pretty nearly snapped his head off.

"Run," says I.

It was time we did run, for the whole seven were after us. It was lucky they hadn't seen anybody but the admiral. They didn't know we were there, and naturally thought it was just their escaped prisoner. They figured, of course, that if they could catch him, they were safe again, and the danger they feared didn't amount to anything. For a cent I'd have tripped the admiral and let them have him, for he was to blame for the mess we were in, but I didn't quite have the heart.

He wasn't much of a runner. That wasn't what he was built for. He didn't have any-

where near enough legs. But I grabbed him by the hand and Catty took the other and we just jerked him through the air. He waved out behind us like we thought he was a kite and were trying to fly him.

They weren't more than fifty yards behind us, but we had made downhill toward the marsh. They couldn't see us for the underbrush and the reeds that were beginning to show up all over. Catty stopped suddenly and says, "Quick!" He reached for the slack of the admiral's trousers and his collar, and I understood him. I did the same, and in a second we had heaved him over into the middle of a thick clump of stuff, and then we ran. It was pretty sure they wouldn't find him if he had sense enough to keep still, and would follow us because they could hear the noise we made. I wasn't so worried about that, because Catty and I can run about as fast as most folks.

"Circle back," says Catty. "I think I got an idea. Back around to the wagon."

"If they catch us," says I, "the band's busted sure."

"Don't let them, then," says he.

I did my best, but they were pretty close. If any of them had sense enough to cut

across they might get us while we were circling. But I hoped they wouldn't. And then I heard somebody yell almost square ahead of me. I didn't stop to think, but just tripped Catty and rolled over with him into the marsh.

"Crawl," says I, "mud or no mud. We're doggone near surrounded."

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN the enemy takes you in front and behind there's nothing to do but dig up some strategy, and we didn't have much time for digging. So we didn't dig. We just dove. Quick as a wink we took a couple of headers sideways and rolled over and lay still. The enemy was hollering so and rampaging around so loud they didn't hear, and in a minute they went rushing past without ever taking a look, and we lifted up our heads and saw the two parties meet.

They did some hunting around after that, but in a few minutes they gave it up and went back to the wagon to see what they could do about it. We sneaked back to where we had thrown the admiral, and there he was, more or less sticking in the mud. So we hauled him out, and he was pretty mad, because he didn't like being mussed up. Dressy people like the admiral feel awful bad when their clothes get soiled. Then we crouched down and thought it over, and Catty got an idea.

"Admiral," he said, "you're a ventriloquist, aren't you?"

"I admit it," says the admiral. "The best. No other approaches me. The crowned heads of Europe——"

"I know," says Catty. "But can you be a half a dozen different men hollering at each other from different directions?"

"My boy," says the admiral, "I can be an army."

"Then," says Catty, "let's go."

As we walked along he told the admiral what his idea was and how to work it, and the admiral was tickled to death because it made him so important. He swelled up with it until he almost busted out of his white vest, and the way he walked you would have thought he was a whole parade instead of being just one little man. Never did I see anything like it.

"I will give," said he, "such an exhibition of my skill as the world has never seen. I will astound you. Until you have heard me at my best you do not realize the vast scope and possibilities of ventriloquism. You cannot comprehend what may be done by years of effort, aided by such an intellect as mine. It is an art, my friends. Doubtless I could

have been a painter or a sculptor. I might have sung in opera. Any art would have been open to me, but I chose to be a ventriloquist. It is greatest of all."

"Sure it is," says Catty, "and to-day you'll prove it to the world."

"Don't stand up on anything and crow again," says I.

"That," says the admiral, "was a foolish thing. But I had to do it."

"Well, don't have to do it again," says I. "Stick to throwing your voice around."

He looked at me kind of proud and stately as if he didn't think I had any right to talk to him like that, but if he'd been the King of Turkey and was out on an expedition like this with me, and went to acting foolish and spoiling things, I'd have told him what was the matter. You bet. When you're on a job it doesn't matter a chip who you are. The only thing that matters is how you go about it to do what you're doing, and if a king wants to be treated like a king he just wants to put his crown in his pocket and 'tend to business from A to Izzard.

You can bet we went good and cautious this time, but I stuck by the admiral, so that if he got enthusiastic again and showed

any signs of crowing I could clap my hand over his mouth. I guess he knew it, because he kept looking at me out of the corner of his eye and muttering to himself.

It didn't take but a few minutes to get back to where we could see the wagon, and there was the whole gang, Withey and all, bunched around, trying to study out how they could get out of the fix. And nobody seemed to have any ideas. I could have told them what to do, because I'd seen wagons bust down before, but this was one time when I wasn't giving any advice.

"Well," says I to Catty, "are we ready?"

"Fire, Admiral," says Catty.

Well, the admiral reared back his head and puckered up his little face, and then—would you believe it?—a big bass voice yelled way across the clearing. It was a whopping voice and sounded mad and dangerous.

"Hey, Sheriff," it yelled, "here they be! I see 'em."

Then another voice off to one side took it up. "You, Bill, and Tom and Jake, go off to the left. You two take them in front. Us four will hold this side. We got them surrounded."

"All ready, Sheriff," says another voice.

"Be sure," says the sheriff's voice, "to ketch the one named Withey. He's the ringleader."

"We'll git him, all right," another voice yelled.

"Is every man in place?" called the sheriff's voice.

"You bet." About a dozen different voices called out, "You bet."

"Then keep still and wait for the signal," says the sheriff's voice.

Now if you like to see funny things, you should have been there to take a look at that gang of Withey's. They just ran around in circles and tried to hide behind each other and let out a bunch of squawks like chickens. I was like to die with laughing, but I kept it down as low as I could so they couldn't hear. First they would run one way and then they would run another, and then they would stand still. They didn't know what to do, nor how to start in to do it. Right then and there we paid them off for all the trouble they had made, for never since Noah and his Flood have a crowd of folks been so scared. They just clean went out of their heads. A body

would have thought they were a flock of sheep, the way they acted.

And then Withey started to climb a tree. Just what good that was going to do I couldn't see, but maybe he thought a sheriff and his posse was like a pack of wolves and couldn't climb up after him. One of his friends grabbed him by the legs and hauled him down and they started to bang each other with their fists.

Then the admiral puckered up again, and we could hear the sheriff's voice call out, "Hey, men, ready!"

"Ready," yelled a bunch of different voices.

"Charge," says the sheriff's voice.

Well, you should have seen that gang then. They just lit out. It didn't make any difference to them how surrounded they were; they just went away from where they were looking for some place else, and I bet they got there. They didn't go together, either. Each fellow picked out the direction he liked best and tucked down his head and ran. And while they ran the admiral stood up and pelted them with all the different voices he could make. Oh, it was gorgeous!

I bet they didn't stop running before morning.

"Well," says Catty, "that's that."

"As an exhibition," says the admiral, "how did you regard it?"

"Magnificent," says Catty.

"And you?" says the admiral to me. He was going to get all the praise he could.

"Admiral," says I, "General Grant couldn't have done half as well, and Napoleon Bonaparte would have died with envy."

"Hum!" says he. "I believe it has never been surpassed."

"Never," says Catty. "And now let's see about the wagon."

That wasn't so hard to do. Anybody who knows anything knows how to get along with a wagon that's lost a wheel. All you have to do is find a scantling or a sapling, and tie it under the axle so that you go along on three wheels and a kind of a runner. It took us maybe ten minutes to get fixed and then we started off, with the admiral riding on the seat and Catty and I leading the horse, and with that procession we moved into town a little after noon.

CHAPTER XXII

NOW the time for the band tournament in the capital was getting close and we had band practice every single night. We worked. I can tell you we worked. A fellow who missed practice didn't get fined. No, sir. We didn't bother with fines, because nobody had any money to pay them with. What happened was that he got licked. We had a regular licking committee, and after we'd trimmed up a couple of fellows who thought they could take a night off we didn't have any more trouble. Every fellow was on hand, and on hand early.

And Hans Knudsen made us work. Now, from the way Hans spells his name and talks you might think he was Italian, or maybe Greek or Hindu. Yes, sir, you might, being kind of ignorant of foreign languages, think he was a Chinee. But he wasn't any of these; he wasn't Egyptian nor South Sea Islander nor Irish, and he wasn't an Esquimo. What he was was Norwegian. I hear there's some doubt about Hans's nationality, and

that's why I tell you folks all this, but we can't have any errors about him. He was a Norwegian, and he couldn't speak a word of Chinee. I never heard him say anything in Persian, and his Italian didn't amount to much. When it came to English he could make himself understood by yelling loud in Scandinavian and waving his hands. He was as easy to understand as a party of peahens talking over how many eggs they laid that morning.

But he knew about bands and he knew how to make folks work. We blew and drummed and marched so much that we could have done it in our sleep. He made us learn every piece by heart, and I know I could faint dead away and go right on playing to the end. Work! Say, you don't know what work is like until you've had Hans climbing your back for a few weeks. He was never satisfied. When we got so good we thought we had the world beaten, he used to give us dressings-down that had us all convinced that three loafers in the railroad station with mouth organs could step out and beat us to a jelly.

By this time the town was getting kind of interested in us, and twice Hans let us

give band concerts in the square, and folks cheered and hollered for us, and along toward the end they made arrangements to have a special train, and about half the population got tickets to go along and hear us clean up the state. It was some change from the time when they wouldn't let us play inside the town limits. And we made some money, too. That all helped. We got half a dozen jobs playing for things around the county where they paid all our expenses and gave us five dollars apiece to lead parades or play in the grand stand at ball games or races or old-home weeks or things like that. But the money all went into the treasury and not a fellow got a cent for himself.

"If there's any left when the tournament's over," says Catty, "we'll divide it. Not before."

Why, as the day came around, the town was more excited than we were, and held meetings, and had a sign painter paint big banners to hang on our special train. And the men who made bets went around betting on us, and our dads took a hand and made believe they had been for us all the time, instead of threatening to wallop us if we played our horns in the house. It's funny

how much more popular you are after you get so you have a chance to be at the top than you were when you just start in and don't do anything but disturb folks.

At last it was the day before the tournament and our special train pulled in. The station was all bunting, and everybody in town was down to see us off, and maybe half of the town got on the train to go to the capital to be right there so they could brag and say we came from their town if we won. Just what they planned to say if we lost I never found out. I bet they would have found something to say, but it wouldn't have been interesting.

We were in one car by ourselves, and Hans was boss and wouldn't let anybody come in to disturb us. He wouldn't talk about the tournament and wouldn't let us talk about it. We didn't play a note, and he said to forget we were a band at all and make believe we were going fishing. But it was hard. Not one of us had an idea in his head that wasn't tied up with what was going to happen to-morrow. We couldn't eat and we couldn't sleep.

They had made reservations for us at the best hotel, and Hans made us go there and

eat and go to bed. He wouldn't let us go out and walk around town or anything, because he was afraid something might happen. And he had all our band instruments put in one room, and hired a man to sit up with them as if they were a sick friend. Oh, he didn't take any chances, you can bet!

But we could look out of the windows into the streets and see what went on, and we counted thirty bands marching up and down and showing off, and one of them was Withey's. It was a fine band, too, and looked awful gorgeous with those fine, expensive uniforms. And other bands played so well that it took some of the conceit out of us when we heard them. No, sir, we didn't feel half so cocky after we had heard Withey's band, and a couple of the ones from upstate, as we did when we got on our train. I began to have quite a handful of doubts about winning that prize, or even getting second or third.

"There's just one thing to do," says Catty, "and that's to give them all we got. When it's our turn to get on to the grand stand and play, just lick into it as if your life depended on it. We can't do any more than we can do, but we can do all of that.

It won't be so bad to lose if we know we've played better than we ever played before; but if we lose and know we didn't play as well as we can, why, we'll feel rotten all the rest of our lives."

Before we went to bed Hans called a meeting in one room, but he was so excited he couldn't say anything at all in English. He made a fine speech in Scandinavian, and it sounded good, and I was glad I heard it because it made me a nobler and better man, but I would like to know what it was all about. It was good and loud, anyhow, and his gestures were about the best I ever saw.

When he was done Catty got up and slanged us for twenty minutes and then ordered everybody to bed and to sleep. We turned in, and I knew I wouldn't be able to sleep a wink. I was that excited I just boiled inside, and I lay there and thought about everything, and planned how we could win, and how the victory would come to us because I saved the day by tooting my clarinet better than anybody had ever tooted one in the world, and how the Governor of the state came to me and says: "Wee-wee Moore, there's a special prize for you. Of course,

the five-hundred-dollar prize goes to your band, but here's a gold watch all engraved on account of its being you that really won the tournament, because the prize would have gone to Withey's band if it hadn't been for your playing, which was the finest anybody ever heard."

I kept on thinking things like that and enjoying myself like I never did before, and then, all of a sudden, I wasn't enjoying anything, but was sound asleep, and the next thing Catty was hauling me out of bed by the leg.

"To-day's the day," says he. "Get into your uniform and take a deep breath and get ready for the fracas."

"What I need to start me off," says I, "is about three eggs and half a pound of bacon, and a dish of oatmeal and cream and some toast and maybe an orange—and then if there's a little beefsteak and potatoes and a hunk of apple pie, I guess I can get through until noon."

"The hotel is serving our breakfast in a private dining room," says Catty, "and we can have whatever we want. But for cat's sake don't stuff yourself and get sick."

"Huh!" says I. "I guess I know how to carry my food."

"We are scheduled to play at ten fifteen," says he. "We have four minutes' drill in front of the judges' stand and play two selections. There are so many bands that they are divided into two sections, like. Fifteen bands in each section. The judges eliminate from each section until there are just two bands left, and these last two play three pieces each for the prize."

"Ten fifteen, eh? Well, I can eat till ten," says I, "and be ready."

"You ought to see the admiral," says Catty. "He's just been elected president of the world. For a fellow who isn't more than a couple of feet tall he's the biggest man in the state."

"How do you feel?" says I.

"Like somebody had kicked my wind out," he says. "I'm all gone and empty, and I can't breathe very good, and something is spinning around and around inside of me, and I'm half scairt to death. Outside of that I'm feeling fine, except that my knees are wabbling and my throat is so dry I can't talk, and my hair prickles, and I'm a little dizzy."

"Then you've got nothing to worry about," says I.

"Not a thing."

"How's our chances?"

"About the same," he says solemn-like.

"The same as what?" says I.

"The same as before you asked me," says he. "If we play better than anybody else we got a good chance to win. If we don't we got a good chance to lose."

"Don't worry," says I. "I'll pull you through."

"Much obliged," says he. "And don't spill egg on your uniform."

And so we went down to breakfast.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE town was jammed with people, and the park where the tournament was being held was so packed it was hard to see how anybody could breathe. There were big grand stands for spectators, but these didn't hold a third of the folks there. While we had breakfast and waited at the hotel for our time to march, we could hear bands playing and folks cheering, so we knew the battle was on, and we kept getting nervouser and nervouser, and to thinking more and more that we didn't have a chance against all these bands from all over. Most of them were grown men and lots of them had been organized for years. We just didn't have a chance. So that when Hans Knudsen came in and told us to get ready we were in such a state of mind that we were almost scairt to go out and try.

But Catty got up on his legs. "Fellows," says he, "I'm scairt stiff, and I bet you all are, too. But we got to go out and we got to play better than we ever did before.

There are thousands of folks out there and we can't go back on our town. Think of all the people who came with us from home. They're expecting us to be a credit to them, and we got to be. And there's another outfit there that is wishing us bad luck, and that is Withey and his crowd. So when you get the signal to play, just think about that kid and make up your minds to lick him. Don't worry about anybody else. Just make believe you're in a duel with Withey, and go out to lick him. You can. You can beat the stuffing out of him."

"And think of me," says the admiral. "Me that's been shaken hands with by all the crowned heads of Europe. I know you will not disgrace me. I could not bear it. . . . I shall march at your head where you can see me. Remember I am with you and all will be well."

Now you couldn't beat that, could you? And the little fellow really believed it. He thought he was such a great man that just his being around was enough to bolster us up—and maybe it was. It's always a good thing to have somebody near in a pinch who is full of confidence. It's sort of catching, I guess.

Then we went out of the hotel and formed in the street, and the drums began the march step and the admiral twiddled his baton and started us off. Somehow we all felt better out there in the air, marching with our uniforms on. And when folks began to clap their hands and holler to us because we looked so good, it helped, too. I guess a lot of folks were for us because we were kids. Anyhow, they were good, and I could feel it bracing up my backbone. We stepped off with a lot more confidence than we had when we came out, and away we went to the park.

First we had to drill a little, which wasn't hard. We had practiced a lot, and while we were going through our evolutions the crowd clapped and cheered, and I could feel we were doing pretty well. A fellow can always tell when he is working right. You know. If you're doing a bum job, somehow you can feel it in your bones, and if you're pretty good you can feel that, too.

Well, we got through that part of it, and out of the corner of my eye I could see the judges watching and making notes. Then we climbed on to the band stand, and Catty took his place in front with his cornet. We were all sitting in a half circle. When we

were ready Catty gave a signal and we all stood up, *click*—every one of us at once. We had practiced it a lot. Then Catty lifted his hand and when he brought it down we walloped the first note. It was funny. From that second I forgot everything except playing the music. I forgot the crowd and the tournament and the whole shooting match and put all I had into the clarinet. It didn't seem any time at all before we were through, and, *slap*, at the signal, we sat down.

Well, sir, you should have heard the applause!

Then, after a minute's rest, we were up again for the second piece, and this was a hard one, too. One of those tricky band pieces with solos and funny time and all the stuff you hear the big bands get away with. We had worked pretty hard on this one, and we knew there weren't a lot of bands with nerve enough to tackle it. We were kind of depending on it to pull us through, if anything could. It all depended on us and whether we played it like a band or like a collection of kids with horns.

Now, when you're in a band, playing, you can't tell so much about how it sounds. You are keeping your eye on the leader and get-

ting the beat, and you hardly sense anything but your own instrument and the bass drum, and that's how it was with me. It was a long piece, and Catty led us through it like a guide taking a party through the woods. He never missed his way, and was as cool and collected, and did his cornet solo just like he was back on the island with nothing but the trees to listen to him. When we finished the stands just went wild. You should have heard them. They hollered and stamped and whanged around until you'd have thought the President of the United States was passing.

Well, that was all of that. We had had our chance, and somehow I felt we had done as well as we could. I knew we had won or lost, but it didn't worry me an awful lot, because whichever way it came out we weren't disgraced. We had given all we had and not one of us had fallen down. If somebody beat us it would be because they had a better band, and not because we hadn't done as well as was in us.

We were all a lot more cheerful as we marched back to the hotel to wait, and Catty was tickled to death. He said he didn't care, and that he was proud of us. And Hans

Knudsen came in and I thought he was going to kiss us, but he didn't.

We knew it would be after noon before we heard how we had come out, but we didn't fuss. No, sir, we just sat around close to the windows, or walked up and down the sidewalk to listen and watch the crowd.

"Take it easy," says Catty, "and don't eat a lot of truck and get all tired out. If it should happen we get picked out of our section, we've got a hard battle on. It will be a lot harder to play a duel with one band, and don't forget it."

"How'll they work it?" I wanted to know.

"One band will play a piece, and then the other, and then the first one again, and so on."

"The same pieces?"

"Yes."

"So if we get picked we'll play a piece, and the other band will try to play it better, is that it?"

"That's the ticket," says he.

"Gosh!" I says. "I hope the judges don't pick a piece we can't play."

"They won't. They've got to pick pieces we both know."

"Then I shan't worry."

"It won't do any good to worry. Just play."

We had our lunch, and then—it was just two o'clock—Hans came in and told us we had been picked in our section, and we let out a yell. That was a lot, and, honest Injun, it was more than I hoped for. It was great.

"Who's the other band?" I hollered, and Catty, who was talking serious with Hans, turned around with a queer look. "It's Withey's," says he.

"Withey's! . . . Did they win out in their section?"

"They sure did," says Catty.

Well, I set my teeth at that. "Fellows," says I, "we got to give that outfit a licking if we blow the stuffing out of our horns."

"If they lick us," says Catty, "I don't want ever to go back home. I could stand it to be beaten by anybody else, but not by them. No, sir, not after the way they've done. They haven't gone at it fair. If they licked us I'd always feel that they'd done something crooked to pull it off."

"Let's beat 'em on the band stand," says I, "and then ketch 'em afterward and knock the wadding out of them."

Then we got orders to start, and we got in line and marched. At the next street corner we looked across, and there was Withey's band marching, too. They got to the park the same time we did, and as they climbed the big band stand from one side, we climbed the other and took our places. You got to admit they looked swell. Those expensive uniforms of theirs were slick, but, on the other hand, we looked pretty good ourselves, and there was this about it—we were almost all smaller. I bet we averaged two years younger than they did.

It took a minute to settle things, and then it was announced that Withey's band would play first. They could select any piece they wanted that we knew how to play. So they picked one and started in on it, and it was a hard one. I listened careful, making believe I was paying no attention at all, and, boy! they sure could play! What they did to that music was something, and when they got through the spectators almost went wild. They cheered for ten minutes.

Then it was our turn, and we picked a piece, and it was a sockdolager, too. And it did seem to me we hadn't got quite as many cheers as Withey's crowd after the first

piece. Maybe it was because it was the same piece and folks were tired of hearing it. But I made up my mind if there was anything I could do to put over this second one, I was there to do it. Afterward every fellow in the band told me he felt the same way.

We slid into it, and I can tell you we played. Catty paid more attention to leading than he did to playing. We each played our own instrument, but it was as if he played on all of us. We could feel him. He just reached down and made us do better than we had ever done before. There was something about him, I don't know what it was, but dad told me it was what folks called the quality of leadership. Anyhow, he was boss of that band through that tune, and it was as much his leading as it was our playing that helped us through.

The spectators almost tore the stands down. I felt pretty good.

Then Withey's band took a hack at it. I don't like to think about how they played even now, because it threw such a scare into me. No use talking, they were good, and, I says to myself, if we beat these birds, we've done something.

Then the judges came over and said that they hadn't been able to find much difference between us, and, to make sure, they were going to put us to a hard test. I think they had planned all along to do this thing. It looked that way, anyhow.

"Now," says the boss judge, "we're going to make you play a piece you've never played before, to see how you are at reading music. That's a test. It will decide. I'm going to ask both your leaders if they have ever practiced this piece, and if they say they haven't, why, you will each play it." Then he called Catty and Withey over and gave the name of the piece and asked if their bands knew it.

I knew the name of it and the tune because I had heard Sousa's band play it once, but we never had tackled it. "No, sir," says Catty, "we've never played it. We haven't the music."

"And how about you?" says the judge to Withey. I watched him close to get the answer, because I knew what it ought to be. Remember the day we went to listen to their practice? Well, that was one of the pieces they played!

"We've never tried it, sir," says Withey,

and I almost jumped up and hollered. Catty turned half around and looked at me, because he knew, too. I expected him to make a yell, but he just looked at Withey once, and Withey sort of flushed. That was all. Catty never said a word, but turned his back and came to us.

"Fellows," he said, "we're up against a crook. We know it. They have played that piece. Not much, maybe, but they have practiced it some. I'm not going to holler. What I want you to do is to prove now that the man who is on the square is the fellow who carts home the bacon. Just do your best and don't get fussed. We'll show that bird."

Withey's band played first. Now you've got to remember he knew Catty knew he had lied, and that wasn't a comfortable feeling. All the band knew he had lied and they were sharing in the lie—and that didn't improve them. I'll bet they were worrying for fear they would get caught at it, too. And that is the frame of mind they were in when they started.

Then our turn came. Now remember, we never had seen this music, and were reading it from sight, but we had been trained

in that, and there was Catty to direct us. Of course we couldn't watch him as we did when we were playing without music, but all the time we were conscious of him. We knew he was there, and, somehow, he got over to us. I don't think I ever *tried* so hard in my life. And then it was over. The tournament was ended and we could see the judges arguing about who had won.

We waited and the crowd waited. They argued quite a while. Then they came down from their place and walked over to the band stand, and my heart beat so you could have heard it a hundred yards. Up they climbed as deliberate as if I wasn't afraid I'd die before they got there, and the boss judge walked out to the front and held up his hand.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "this is a great day for our state. You have heard what our musicians can do. It has been a great day for you, and a great treat. Now it only remains for the announcement of the award of the judges. We have acted fairly, impartially, and have given to the task all the skill we possess. Never have I heard two bands which, on the first two pieces played, were so nearly equal. We could not

decide between them. But in the final test, ladies and gentlemen, the reading and playing of an unfamiliar piece, there was a difference which we could all detect. In that one of these bands showed a marked superiority over the other, and it is to that organization we have awarded the first prize of five hundred dollars."

And all this time he hadn't mentioned the name of the band. But when he said that about the last piece, I was pretty certain. It was a cinch that a band who had practiced a piece could play it better than one that never had. Then he turned around and walked over to Catty and held out his hand.

"Young man," he said, "I congratulate you. If your band sticks together a few years, you will be able to play in competition with the best of them. I congratulate you and your band, and it gives me great pleasure to hand you this purse containing the sum of money given as the first prize."

Well, you could have knocked me over with a feather.

For an hour I didn't know anything. It was all a haze. But it was a glorious haze of people cheering and shaking hands and asking us to play more. We were it. I never

saw Catty so proud and happy in my life, and as for the admiral, he was so puffed up he looked twice his size. And then, that evening, we played a special concert on the lawn of the Governor's mansion, and he came and shook hands with all of us, and then we went to bed. It was about all I could stand for one day.

Catty and I had a room together.

"Catty," says I, "I knew we'd lost as soon as the judge named that piece and Withey said he never had played it."

"That," said Catty, "is when I quit worrying. I knew we had won."

"How?" says I.

"Because I knew nobody could do his best when he had something on his mind to worry him, and every one of them had after that lie. It was a cinch. No. What Withey did was to beat himself. I could have kissed him."

"Anyhow," says I, "it was a big day."

"It's been a big summer," says he, "but it's over."

"There 'll be other summers," says I.

"And we'll be there to enjoy them," says he.

THE END

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